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# MIRROR OF INDIAN ART

**G. VENKATACHALAM**

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**MODERN INDIAN ARTISTS  
TRAVEL DIARY OF AN ART STUDENT**

(In the Press)

Jo  
Kamala  
and  
Fred Harvey



## MIRROR OF INDIAN ART

### PREFACE. .

**M**OST of the articles collected here were originally contributed to the Art Supplement of the *New India* daily, edited by my Chief, Dr. Annie Besant. Others appeared in art journals like *Rupam*, *Roopa-lekha* and *Triveni* and in the *Hindu Illustrated Weekly*; four new chapters were added to complete the book. The only justification for publishing these short studies on some aspects of Indian Art, under the title of "*Mirror of Indian Art*", is that they were widely read and appreciated when they appeared as weekly articles in *New India*, and repeated requests have come to me from friends and fellow-students

that these may be preserved in a more permanent form and be made available to a larger circle of readers, both here in India and elsewhere abroad. I hesitated to do so as these essays do not lay claim to much scholarship or literary merit, but I am assured by a good number of my friends, especially artist-friends, that they found them helpful and to a certain extent illuminative. Some complimented me for the popular way in which they were presented to the lay readers and others urged the necessity for publishing such books at the present moment to awaken interest and enthusiasm on a much neglected side of our national life. And hence the book.

“MIRROR OF INDIAN ART” attempts to reflect, very imperfectly of course, not only the past art-heritage of India, but what is more vital and important, the present trend and tendencies, with a view to indicate their future developments. It is conceded on all hands that India is on the threshold of a new era, in the throes of a new birth, and with it the quickening of a new life, and, therefore, a new manifestation of art. This is a stage of transition when old things are giving place to new and a new valuation is put on things old, and, therefore, a period of experimentation and adjustment. There are many beautiful and

useful forms in the old arts of India that need to be revived and vitalized, and there are many crude and useless elements that need to be discarded. The half-assimilated culture and arts of the Occident must soon give place to a real national culture and art, and to that end the new pulsating life must be directed in right channels. What India needs at the present moment is not traditionalists and copyists who live upon the past, but a group of young enthusiasts, pioneers, rebels, with the necessary vision, imagination and skill to create forms suitable to and expressive of the creative genius of the race. The past is useful only to the extent that it inspires ; it is the future that calls out to the present. In a forthcoming book I hope to discuss and analyse the present tendencies that are at work and to indicate their possible development along the desired lines. It is my humble view that the ideals of Indian Art are rooted in the *permanent* and the *fundamental* and not in the *transitory* and *ephemeral*, and, therefore, of lasting value to the world. The ideals and the achievements of modern European art show a tendency in this direction, and there is much in the art of the East that will help to illumine the dark spaces in Western art, as there is much in the latter that

will enrich and beautify the former. All lovers of art should dream and work for that happy consummation.

I lovingly dedicate this book to my very dear friends, Kamaladevi and Fred Harvey, who have ever sympathised with me, encouraged and helped me in my work for Indian art. They are silent as they are sincere in their love and work for the cause. I acknowledge here my thanks to the Editors of the journals in which these articles first appeared. I have also to acknowledge my grateful thanks to my elders in the field, Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy, Mr. Havell, Mr. Gangoly and Dr. Cousins, whose life and works have been a great source of inspiration and guidance to me in my endeavour to understand and interpret the arts of India.

6, ST. JOHN'S  
ROAD,  
BANGALORE,  
August, 1929.

*G. Venkatachalam.*

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## MIRROR OF INDIAN ART

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**FOLK ART IN GUJERAT**

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## **MIRROR OF INDIAN ART**

### **FOLK ART IN GUJERAT**

#### **Garbha Songs and Dance.**

ONE of the most hopeful signs for the future of art is the growing interest that is being shown in Folk Art all over the world and the attempts that are being made to revive and restore it to its proper place in the national life of the country. If art expresses life, as it assuredly does, and if art is the language of the emotions, then, surely, folk art is the truest expression of the creative genius of a race and is the best approach for understanding its national psychology. Folk art is the art of the people, and therefore it is the most natural and

spontaneous expression of the soul of the people. Any work of art to be useful must be sincere, and folk art fulfils that function. A "developed" or an "advanced" art is necessarily a mental process, and therefore, a studied, calculated and sophisticated achievement; it is an index of the cultural level of a civilized community. Folk art has its roots in the soil of the people and it is their most natural mode of artistic response to the environmental influence. The art is often subjective, simple and decorative. The artless simplicity of the folks, their unsophisticated philosophy of life and religious fervour often find beautiful expression in folk art. They create for the mere joy of creation; it is the natural response of the Divine Beauty within to the impacts of the Cosmic Beauty without; and in this wider sense, every man, woman and child is potentially a creative artist and how well folk arts all over the world exemplify this truth.

Soviet Russia gave the lead to the revival of folk-dance, folk-music, folk-dramas and folklore in modern Europe. This is as it should be. Whatever may be the political, economical and social nostrums administered to the suffering millions of Russia by the Bolshevik quacks, the fact remains that the national

art, deep-rooted in the nature of this mystical race, blossomed forth, under the stress of economic distress and social confusion, in its variegated beauty, shedding fragrance all round, to the joy of art-lovers all over the world. Russian *ballets* still hold their place in classical dance ; her theatres, with marvellous and ingenious lighting effects and stage-settings, still influence the theatres of the modern world ; in painting and music, she is second to none of the European Nations of to-day. But Russia's special contribution to modern art is the awakening of interest in folk art and raising it to a level of general appreciation by cultured people. The Arts League of Service in England did splendid service by reviving folk-dances and folk-music, and the various art movements in the leading centres of Europe have given great stimulus in that direction.

India, more than any other country in the world, is rich in folk arts. Her ancient civilization, which saw many races and many cultures rise, grow and decay within her bosom, has preserved even till now some remnants of their rich and varied folk arts. From Kashmir to Kumari and from Sind to Assam the country is rich in them ; and each province has its own distinct, characteristic features, though the

fundamental impulse is one. Folk art in India is essentially religious; they are mostly domestic--decorative arts and cottage-crafts. Religious worship and ceremonies call forth music, dance and decorations, and the inborn artistic instinct of the people has evolved wonderful arts out of them. Some are incredibly clever such as designing by the feet, while dancing, a beautiful lotus flower on the smooth surface of spread-out sands or the balancing of about half a dozen bright water-filled brass pots on the head while making difficult and sensuous gyrations of a nimble and delicate body over a soft, unbaked earthen pot and dancing to set music.

Gujerat is a very interesting province in more than one sense. It is the richest province in India both with regard to agricultural and industrial wealth. The richest mill-owners of India are there, and commercially it is the most advanced province in India. Its sea-front has ports of great antiquity and the earliest sea-trade with the West was from some of them. It was enormously rich in wealth even ten centuries ago, and it was the one great ambition of the first Muhammadan conqueror, Ghazni, to loot Gujerat and to plunder its far-famed temple of Somnath, which he did after several attempts. To

the religious-minded among the Hindus, Gujerat is ever associated with Dwaraka, the fairy Island City built by Shree Krishna ; to the Jains, it is the home-land of their temples and faith. The textiles and crafts of Gujerat have ever won the admiration of art connoisseurs ; but its folk arts are so little known outside and so little appreciated.

The people of Gujerat are extremely refined in their looks, deportment, dress and manners. They are physically fair and attractive and their womenfolk are the most beautiful in India. The women of Nagar community, with their delicate bodies, straight lithe limbs, gracefully poised heads, rich, ripe-corn golden complexion and clear dark eyes are undoubtedly the most beautiful of Indian women. A group of Gujerati ladies in their gay dress is a more attractive sight than any other corresponding group of Indian women. They look a bed of tulip flowers in motion. They dress daintily in soft satins and silks of soft colours and of fine texture ; there is an innate sense of refinement in them. And it is these women of Gujerat that have preserved its folk arts from death or decay ; they have carried on the traditions of those arts from generation to generation in their life, customs and

religious worship. Even to-day, in spite of the advancing tide of Western industrialism which has swept all over Gujerat, the women of that fair province have preserved the beautiful little details of their daily life and of ceremonial occasions.

The *Garbha* songs, the *Ras-Leela* dance and the *Rangoli* designs are still their most cherished domestic arts, and in their respective religious seasons they enter into this artistic creation and joy of life with a zest and enthusiasm that is most admirable. Old women and young women, girls and children, all vie with one another in participating in this joyous art of creation. The rich and the poor, the educated and the uneducated, all alike share in this national festival.

The *Garbha* dance is not a dance of the rainy season like the *Kajri* dance of Northern India ; it is more a festival of the autumn. It is after the dark rolling clouds of the monsoon have passed away drenching the country all round with ceaseless down-pour, damping the spirits of the people, and while the bright sun shines once again, and when the earth smiles with the riotous colours of the gorgeous greens of grass, the golds of corn, the whites, reds and blues of flowers and the air is filled with the fresh fragrance of the sod. The whole nature resounds with

sounds and songs and there is new life in everything. The *Garbha* songs breathe joyousness, play, laughter, joke and mirth. The movement of the steps of the dancers suggests leisure and repose. The songs are set to a light melody, soft and pleasing to the ear, and the dance is slow, measured and wavy. It is simple music, simple dance and simple songs, but the execution of the whole by a group of gaily dressed young women is "a thing of beauty and a joy for ever". One girl leads the chorus in song and others join after her as they move round in gracefully adjusted steps and clapping their hands in unison at certain fixed intervals. The rhythm of the movement is set to the rhythm of the song and the wonderful harmony of gesture, step and song are suggestively beautiful. Now they sing of Radha's love for Krishna and now of the love of a modern fop to a Miss Modern Education ; now they caricature humorously some social evils of society and now of the incongruities of the modernization of Indian life ; now it is religious and mystical and now it is secular and silly. It is indeed a very artistically conceived social enjoyment.

## **FOLK ART IN GUJERAT**

### **(2) Ras-Leela.**

INDIA'S seasonal festivals are many and varied. Living in the closest communion with nature and with an inborn love for the picturesque and the beautiful, the people of this land have closely watched and followed the varying moods of nature in the exuberance of her joyous creation. Nature, to them, was the mantle of Divinity, and, therefore, of sacred import and of spiritual significance. Life and art in India were as spontaneous, free, unfettered and natural as the nature around them ; the life of the people was led in wide open fields, green shady groves and by the side of flowing rivers and flowery tanks. Nature was

bounteous in her manifold gifts and the people were as generous as Mother Nature. The natural religion which they followed gave them a sense of the reality of the *unity of life*, and folk art is the unconscious expression of that realization. The purpose of life, for them, was to fulfil the *Dharma* in which they were born, ordained by a Wisdom greater than theirs, a Power stronger, and a Law juster than theirs, and towards the fulfilment of that *Dharma* they lived and worked in harmonious relationship with the environment in which they were placed. Nature, to them, was not "red in tooth and claw," and they did not set out to conquer her by ruthless destruction with their human ingenuity. They, on the other hand, communed with her inner spirit and sought inspiration amidst her external beauties. Their great shrines and *thirthas* were built amidst most magnificent natural sceneries ; deep isolated ravines far from the haunts of men, gorgeous, rich, verdant valleys watered by pure crystal springs, snow-clad peaks resplendent with the coruscating colours of the setting sun, these were the spots they selected for their religious and spiritual life. Their ambition was not to scale the steepest path and to climb the highest mountain in order to achieve an ephemeral triumph,

but to reverentially and submissively allocate those places as abodes for their Gods and dedicate them as places for pilgrims. Hence the Himalayas became the home of the great God Mahadev and Ganges is worshipped as the Mother of the Nation.

This intimate association of nature with life and religion is well exemplified in the folk arts of India. The changing moods of nature into spring, summer, autumn and winter are closely linked up with the life of the people. Marriages and festivals, worship and pilgrimages, sowing and harvesting closely follow these seasonal variations. The spring-time in nature is also the spring-time in the life of the people. *Vasantutsava* (spring festival) in India is of great antiquity and of universal merry-making. It is a Festival of Love, when men and women, boys and girls, rejoice in frolicsome mirth and play with nature, which is recreating herself by putting on tender shoots of green leaves and blossom-buds of pearl-white, pale-mauve and bright-pink colours. This primitive spring festival later on took the form of a Love Festival, and a distinct cult arose out of that. In some of the old Indian dramas, reference is made to *Madana-utsava*, the worship of the Love-God.

Another of the seasonal festivals that is common

all over India, and especially in the North, is *Holi* or the Carnival of Colours. It is generally observed in the full moon of the month of *Phalgun* (March) every year to celebrate the coming of the spring, with its life-giving southern breeze, the budding of the scarlet *asoka* flowers and the fragrance of the mango blossom. In the lower ranks of society, the fun and ribaldry descend to flagrant indecencies from which even the womenfolk are not allowed to escape. The joyous nature of the festival becomes incarnate in noisy bands of excited revellers, who parade the streets singing songs and dripping wet, and bespattered all over with glowing daubs of red, yellow or blue. This is merely a natural reaction to the experiencing within of the quickening effects of the spring with its mysterious wonder of creation and the joy of reproduction, and under this spell, the artlessly simple and unsophisticated folks of the villages give way to unrestrained mirth, casting aside for the moment all the ordinary conventions, often even the decencies and moralities of life. "The *Holi* is a true expression of the emotions of the Hindu East at spring time, when the warm sun which bronzes the cheek of beauty also subtly penetrates each living fibre of the yielding frame, awakening by his

mellowing touch dreams, soft desires and wayward passions, which brook no restraint, which dread no danger, and over which the metaphysical Hindu readily throws the mantle of his most comprehensive and accommodating creed."

When Vaishnavism, and the Cult of Krishna absorbed this primitive festival of spring and raised it to a religious festival, it became the sacred *Dole-Leela*. While preserving all the elements of the seasonal festival, it invested it with a peculiar mystery and dignity. It became a "Leela" or sport or incident in the idyll of the sportive Krishna in the bowers of Brindaban. It is also a feast of national merrymaking in which the ceremony of swinging (Dola) became an essential feature. In its religious side, it soon developed into a ritual, where the effigy or image of Krishna is rocked for three days on a beautifully decorated *palang* or seat hung in chains from the ceiling, amidst a gathering of festive makers. On its secular side, it is a great pastime and sport for young ladies, who seek the seclusion of groves, parks or gardens, and besport themselves on swings with accompanying songs and music. This is one of the most popular of the pastimes for men and women of Gujarat even to-day. There is not a house in that

province without a *Dole-mancha*, or swing-seat, some simple and plain and others richly coloured and elaborately ornamented, on which the folks at home spend their afternoons swinging slowly, telling tales or hearing gossips or singing soft melodies.

But of all the religious and seasonal festivals observed in Northern India, none is more popular and more enjoyed by all classes of people alike, without getting into any licentiousness or ribaldry, than *Ras-Leela*, the dance of Krishna with the Gopis. Of all the episodes (leelas) of Sri Krishna's life on this earth, the *Ras-Leela* with the cow-herd maidens of Vraja makes the deepest appeal to Vaishnavas, and especially to the people of Rajputana and Gujerat. The story is very old indeed, and it has been the favourite theme for ages past for saints, poets and painters of India. The great masters of the Kangra School of Painting have depicted this story in a thousand and one entrancing ways in their wonderful miniature paintings ; poets like Govindas and saints like Surdas have sung its glory in their songs ; the philosophers of mediæval Vaishnavism have evolved a system round it and cults of different denominations came into being to carry on the tradition. The story is gorgeous in its setting. "They met, Krishna and

the Gopis of Vraja, in a lovely bower on the banks of the Jumna. It was a moonlit night. The perfume of the full-blown *Malika* attracted the bees in their thousands, and the whole grove was resonant with their humming. A gentle breeze was playing with the soft, murmuring ripples of the silver-flooded Jumna. The sky-clad Krishna, the Lord and the Beloved of the fair maidens of Brindaban, played soft, entrancing melodies on his *murli*. The peacock feather of his crown, slightly inclined to the left, waved in the breeze. He wore a simple gold-coloured cloth round his waist and on his back, set off by a beautiful garland of flowers which reached down to his feet. He stood under the *Kadamba* tree and played, and the music cast its spell all round. The young damsels stood near him and looked. He at once arranged them in a ring and began the dance to a tune of his flute. He danced and danced ; so quickly did he move that everyone of the damsels seemed to think that he was by her side. He was here, there, everywhere, between every two of them there was a Krishna. They all danced and sang, for the Lord was in their midst. As they danced the little bells in their anklets made a sweet jingling sound.” Thus they danced under the *Kadamba* tree near the

flowing Jumna among the humming bees and fragrant flowers and under a moonlit sky. Such is the origin and tradition of *Ras-Leela*, which is still danced by the people of Gujerat and Rajputana. The sweet melodies of Surdas, Vaishnavadas and Meerabai still enchant the participants, and the joy of its rhythmic movement is still shared by them. The dance by itself is very simple and is performed by a group of youths and maidens who move in a circle to measured steps, with small painted wands in their hands, by which they play and mark time as they sing in a chorus accompanied by some music. The circle or the *rasa mandala* is two deep and each player in the outer ring has his or her partner in the inner ring and as they move round after striking several times with their respective sticks in a given manner, the inner partner changes ; thus every outer player meets and plays with an inner player. The music and songs are generally well chosen and the whole effect of the dance is charming. A simple folk art and yet a great national festival.

## **FOLK ART IN GUJERAT**

### **(3) Rangoli.**

“**A**SIA is one. The Himalayas divide only to accentuate that unity.” Thus, that great artist-idealistic of Japan, Kukuzo Okkakura, began his most fascinating book on the *Ideals of the East*. With equal truth and, perhaps, with greater emphasis, it may be said that India is one ; the Vindhya range divide only to accentuate that unity. It was not the politicians or the geographers that fixed the physical boundaries of India, but it was religion that gave to India her geographical limits. “From the Himalayas to Cape Comorin and from Dwaraka to Puri,” was not a bare statement of fact of India’s physical extent,

but a *mantra* to be repeated in the daily life of the people. The religions of India, the philosophies of India, the arts and sciences of India, have ever proclaimed that fundamental unity, and no matter however much the people that inhabit this vast sub-continent may differ in the external expressions of their life, which, after all, add only to the richness of their culture and civilization, in the inner life and in things that vitally concern the well-being of the nation, the Indian people are one. Nowhere is this unity so strongly perceived as in the religious festivals of India and in the ceremonial arts connected with them. Deepavali (Festival of Lights), Naga Panchami (Cobra Worship), Ganesh Chathurthi (Worship of Ganpat), Durga Puja (Shakti Cult), all these are great national festivals which link up India closely and intimately and make for national solidarity. *Bhajans*, *Sankirtans*, *Jatras*, *Pommalattam*, *Kathekkali*, all these are modes of the artistic expression of their religious life.

A characteristic feature of the Hindu religious life is the *socialization* of its arts. In the West, art is personal and aristocratic; in the East art has always been impersonal and democratic. This is best exemplified in the folk and domestic arts of India.

Perhaps the best environment for an encouragement of popular art is afforded in India by the very nature of her social organization, which is communalistic and not individualistic. In the domestic arts, which are the unconscious self-expression of the inherent noble and beautiful ideals of the community, there is no striving after the perfection of either form or technique, no studied attempt to make things significant. They are spontaneous, inborn and natural. It is this art-instinct in the Indian people that makes them love their clay pots and brass utensils and their *lotas* and *chembus*, which are extremely artistic commodities, and not unlovely and unshapely as the tin mug or the enamelled dish, which the educated Indians prefer to-day. The conventionally carved wooden images of the gods and goddesses, the bronze-cast figures of *Devas* and *Devis*, the round-shaped clay pots and earthen dolls, which amply testify to the development of popular ceramic art in the service of religion ; the bright-coloured toys which Indian children love to play with ; the every-day attire, and especially the apparel the peasant-folks put on for ceremonial occasions, such as the *phulkaris*, ornamented with bits of beads or glass, which flash in the sun ; the *cholis* or bodice, often richly embroidered ;

the *bandana* sarees or the die-stamped cloths of very fine texture in endless varieties of colour ; the golden *kinkhwabs* or brocades in a variety of tasteful patterns and designs ; the delicacy and minuteness of workmanship of their ornaments, all these testify to the remarkable innate sense of artistic feeling which both the rich and the poor, the educated and the illiterate, share and enjoy.

But in no other field of art has this love for designing beautiful patterns, drawing decorative designs, ensembling clever colour-combinations, been more persistent than in the most popular of domestic arts, the *Rangoli*. This art of drawing figures, geometrical patterns, floral designs and flowers in colours on the floor is universal in India, and though there are local variations and provincial peculiarities, both with regard to their forms and contents, yet it is a national art indulged by all alike, young and old, rich and poor, and in villages as well as in towns. It is here that the native feeling for decorativeness is seen at its best, and Indian women best display their indigenous tastes, variety of expressions and skill of hands in this domestic art. Hindu girls are really the folk-artists of India ; they create for the mere joy of creation. The love of their faith calls for their service in a

practical manner, and that is to beautify their homes for occasions like worship, festival and marriage. Nothing gives greater joy to an Indian girl than to be busy cleaning the house, watering the street, tending the tulsi plant, hanging festoons and torans across the doors and decorating the floors of houses and streets with designs of white and coloured rice powder. This art is entirely in the hands of womenfolk in India. In the South, it is called *kolam* ; in Bengal, *alpana* ; in Orissa, *jhanti* ; and in Gujarat, *rangoli*.

This folk art is not an aboriginal art nor is it childish. It is a highly developed domestic decorative art in which the artists as well as the on-lookers take delight and pride. It is a traditional art, and though much of the designs that one sees in India are extremely conventionalized, yet there is a freshness and charm about them. In the South, no colour is introduced, and the designs are mostly geometrical ; in Bengal, very little colour ; it is in Gujarat this art is to be seen in its richness and in its full glory. It must be seen in its own environment to be properly appreciated and to feel the sense of mastery in drawing and colour-combinations it shows. It is entirely a freehand art, and most of the girls that draw such beautiful patterns, freely and “out of their minds,”

have had no instruction or training in drawing, nor are they taught to follow blindly the designs and patterns of the elders. The forms and the contents are in their own imagination carried on through generations, and in the joyous expression of their life, it finds the fullest and freest expression. It has often been observed that, when boys trained in the Schools of Art method make experiments in *Rangoli*, they produce stiff and lifeless designs, compared with those of the girls who do them out of reverence and joy. It is impossible to put down in cold letters the pleasure and the understanding that one gets when one sees them being done slowly, carefully and religiously, with anxious expression on the face of the designers as to their ultimate success or failure. I have watched with great interest several girl friends of mine design and finish perfect specimens of *Rangoli* patterns for my delight and edification.

My introduction to this art in Gujerat was under the happiest of circumstances. I was specially invited by my two young Nagar friends, husband and wife, who are both artists, to visit them in their home at Surat during the Deepavali week in order that I may get an opportunity to study this art at first-hand and in close quarters. I had most unwillingly to tear

myself away from the powerful spells of Ajanta, where I had been spending a week, studying its marvellous frescoes, and I did not regret the sacrifice. Coming to Gujerat, as I did, straight from Ajanta, I was able to see more into this folk art of India than I would have been able to do otherwise. The thousand and one delightful designs and *motifs* that adorn and enrich the flowing friezes of Ajanta that puzzle and amaze visitors to these glorious caves, the moving lines and the graceful curves that abound in the compositions of Ajanta paintings, and the sombre, subdued, colour-effects of the frescoed walls there, all these, to my mind, seemed to have had their roots in this simple, sober, domestic art of India. I could see, in the innumerable patterns which the dainty damsels of Gopipura at Surat designed in the night time for the townsfolk to see and rejoice in the morning, the background for the classical art of Ajanta. My kind hostess, who is herself a clever artist and a delightful critic, took me, with lantern in hand, night after night, through the streets and bye-lanes of the town to see the infinite variety of designs and colour-schemes that one can possibly see, and to note the patience, skill and devotion of these young folk-artists of Gujerat. In the hundreds that I was able to see,

both inside the house and on the streets, there were not two similar ones. If the designs were alike in any exceptional case, the colour arrangements were different. No artist copied another ; no two girls compared their colour-notes or outlines. Each worked singly and unaided, and everyone of those *Rangoli* designs was a striking piece of creative art.

Learned critics may not give this art a high place in the world of art, but it cannot be doubted that such domestic arts are living arts, *vital* in their nature and *sincere* in their expression, and in a special manner they too indicate the simple and direct way of Humanity's search for Beauty.



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## WOOD-CARVING IN INDIA.

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## MIRROR OF INDIAN ART

### WOOD-CARVING IN INDIA.

#### **Fallacies in Art Criticism.**

ONE of the drawbacks of early European criticism of Indian art was that it was highly presumptive. Many things were taken for granted ; many unwarranted interpretations were put on obvious facts ; many inferences were drawn from ~~not~~ <sup>very</sup> convincing conclusions ; and very often a wrong standard of criticism was established to evaluate things Indian. Often the standard of judgment, the angle of vision, the method of approach and the psychology of study were European and not Indian. There was enough industry, patience, scholarship and enthusiasm, but little understanding. Splendid work has been done.

by these noble pioneers in the field of oriental art, and one cannot but feel supremely grateful for their selfless services in recovering to the world what was almost a forgotten and well-nigh dead art-heritage. The world is the richer for their discoveries. But all these do not in any way condone their wrong premises and their false conclusions on the subject. One could enumerate them categorically ; and with the same amount of industry, patience and scholarship get at exactly opposite conclusions to those arrived at by these European savants. It was not entirely their fault nor will it be fair to criticize their motive or their achievements. They did their best and, to the best of their ability, actuated by the noblest of impulses. It is now for the Indian to study his own art and to interpret it to the world in the light of his national genius and racial psychology, and if, in the course of his studies and researches, he thinks it necessary to revise any old idea or theory established by a Western scholar on any one aspect of his country's art, he should do so without belittling the efforts of the former. Much waits to be done in that direction.

One such fallacy of art criticism is that the art of the stone-cutter was borrowed from the art of the

wood-carver, or in other words, stone-carving was a later development than wood-carving. This view was held by almost all eminent students of Indian Architecture, from Fergusson to Havell, and was based on the assumption that the earliest architecture now extant in India in the rock-cut temples of Karli, Ajanta, Nasik, Mahabalipuram and other places shows a wooden origin in certain constructive features and architectural structures, such as the dove-tailing and bolting together of the parts of pillars, the curved roofs with rafters, the verandhas with their beams and so on and so forth. The richly carved panels, pilasters and window-screens in stone were thought to be merely copies of wooden works of that kind, and it was thought the stone-carver drew his designs and *motifs*, his skill of ornamentation and power of designing from the art of the wood-carver.

The theory expounded in support of this statement was that wood is an easier medium for the purpose of carving than stone and that therefore the ancient craftsmen should have begun with the former ; also that wood was more easily procurable and cheaper than stone ; and that the fact that there are no architectural remains in India prior to, say, the 3rd or 4th

century B.C., now to be seen, clearly shows that the materials of building in those earlier centuries must have been of a perishable kind and therefore wooden construction was the feature of architecture in those days. The last argument, convincing as it is, cannot negative the contrary proposition that there may have been materials other than wood, something like the modern cement, for instance, which the ancients used in their construction of buildings, and which may have been more easily perishable than granite and more durable than wood. The rock-cut temples were only a phase in Indian architectural evolution, which lasted from, say, the 3rd century B.C. to 7th century A.D., and surely there were other types of architecture in India prior to that period as there have been since then. The excavations at Patliputra, Nalanda, Takshila and Harappa clearly show the use of mortar and brick in those days. Wood must have played the same adjunct part to stone as it does now.

The fact, so far as one can investigate the matter for the past six centuries or so, and especially in the last century or two, is that the wood-carvers have copied and taken their *motifs* and designs from the stone-cutters of ancient India. I shall substantiate

my statement by a more detailed study of the subject and from examples now to be seen all over India in a separate article following this. But what is often ignored is the fact that stone-carvers and wood-carvers belong to the same caste, and though the ancient guild system, which preserved and protected, encouraged and developed those crafts, did not permit social unity between these two sub-castes of a single major caste, yet it permitted the interchange of crafts, which was distinctly a proof of their unity. The craftsmen worked both on stone and wood ; the nature of their work was identical, only their medium differed. The man who worked skilfully on wood, when entrusted with work on stone, did equal justice to himself and to his art. The change of medium, which any skilled workman can master after some practice, was not a great barrier to their success. The crafts were not treated in water-tight compartments, and however rigid the social customs may have been, the arts did not suffer from any such caste-scruples. The son of a wood-carver often took to stone-carving and *vice versa*. There was no borrowing or copying.

A skilled craftsman was as at home with wood as he was with stone ; the two arts went together. There was as much chance of the stone-cutter influencing

the wood-carver as the latter the former. Wood and stone were materials, ever available in this country, and the art of shaping them is as old as the art of architecture in this country, and they developed simultaneously and side by side. The difference in the hardness or softness, the mutability or pliability of the material need not give one precedence over the other. If literature is any trustworthy evidence, then we have descriptions of temples, palaces and images of stones and marbles in the two great epics of India, one of which is at least 3,000 years old according to Indologists and Orientalists, and according to the Hindu Chronology at least 5,000 years old. And over and above all these, there is the traditional history of the craftsmen which counts for something in a proper estimation of their art.

I cannot better illustrate it than by quoting a pregnant, albeit pithy, retort of an old traditional wood-carver whom I met now a year ago in Baroda, and with whom I had talks on his art-craft. He is one of the most skilful of these wood-carvers now living in India, and some of his excellent works can be seen inside the palace of the Maharaja, as well as in several private houses. He is a hereditary carver and traces his ancestry to several

centuries in the same craft. I questioned him, very reverentially of course, (for was I not before a master craftsman !) about the many details of his craft, and finally, but foolishly, asked him if it was true that stone-carving came after wood-carving, and that wood-carvers influenced the art of stone-carvers. He straightened up and said smilingly : " Who told you that ? Viswakarma, our Patron-God, was not a carpenter as foolish people believe, but a mighty builder in stones and whoever would think of building mightily in wood ? My grandsires were great stone-carvers and you can see their work even now in ruins in the temples of Gwalior." I returned home humbled but wiser.

## MIRROR OF INDIAN ART

### **WOOD-CARVING IN INDIA.**

#### **(2) Existing Examples of the Art.**

**A** great advantage of native criticism of Indian art is that it discards the practice of studying Indian art, its derivatives and ramifications in watertight compartments. The Indian critic, like the Indian artist, instinctively senses the unity of all arts ; and inasmuch as the philosophical background of Indian life and art is this search for unity, it is easier for him to understand the basic motives of his art. And no feature of Indian art affords so great a diversity and so many points of common interest and mutual influence as the art of carving on stone and wood and no

aspect of Indian art can have so much to teach as wood-carving, as it is not only one of the oldest of art-crafts in this country but one of the most highly developed and perfected. Its ramifications extend literally from the Himalayas to Cape Comorin, and in spite of local variations and differences in treatment, the art retains its fundamental unity. A history of the decorative art of the wood-carvers will furnish more materials for a correct and proper understanding of the development of art-crafts in India than any corresponding study of any other feature of Indian art. Its vast antiquity will interest the antiquarian to fix historical dates for his study ; its religious significance will appeal to the sentiments of the religious-minded and its artistic merits will reveal the racial peculiarities of the people. One can also trace the development of forms and designs, both in architecture and sculpture, from a proper study of wood-works in India, and approximately follow the migration of styles and types and their reaction to the social and religious evolutions of corresponding periods. It must be observed that when one talks of the development or evolution of Indian art, it must not be taken to mean that the study of art in this country ranges from its very beginnings to its modern culmination,

for such is not the fact with regard to Indian art, whatever it may be with regard to the arts of other nations. No one can really know when these fine arts first began in this country. The origins of all arts, like other things in this country, are lost in the mists of antiquity. A study of the *historical development* of Indian art really means its *historical continuity* and many of the fine arts in India can easily be traced to 3,000 years.

The earliest examples of wood-carving were those fragments discovered by archæologists in the ruins of the buried cities of ancient India as well as the few samples dug out by Sir Aurel Stein in the remains of forgotten cities on the slopes of the Tarim basin and near the lake Lop Nor, which distinctly show that Buddhistic art had migrated from India. The art of wood-carving as a feature of architecture can be discerned in old literature, though no examples of them can now be seen owing to their perishable nature. In the middle ages, and especially during the Mughal period of India, wood was used for all domestic purposes, especially for *charpais* with ornamented feet and shafts, caskets for jewels, *chaukis* and *mrahs* in private rooms, state chairs and thrones in palaces. A few of them are now to be seen in the private collections of

some of the Ruling Chiefs of Rajputana, but considerable knowledge can be got by a careful and close study of the paintings of those days. The art has persisted right down through the centuries, and the middle of the last century saw a great creative outburst in wood-carving, as can be seen in the large number of wood-work decorations in the fronts of houses all over India. Gujarat and the Punjab abound in such works ; a walk through the streets of Surat, Baroda, Ahmedabad, or Amritsar, Hoshiarpur, or Jullunder will convince anyone as to their quality and excellent workmanship. In modern days wood-carving is to be seen chiefly in the Punjab, Gujarat, Mysore and in Rajputana. The United Provinces have good work of doors and windows in wood but very massive ; Nagpur in C. P. follows the Deccan style in ornamentation but nothing definitely original or interesting. Bengal is poor in wood-work and there are no carvers worth the name there. Nepal and Burma are rich in them but much influenced by Chinese feeling. The chief centres of wood-carving in the Punjab are Amritsar, Ludhiana, Jullunder, Lahore and Peshawar. The carving is generally in low relief or flat, cut on a geometrical basis. In Kashmir the work is bold and effective.

It is unfortunate that the carvers there have taken to realistic carving in walnut which is deplorable. The woods chiefly employed are teak, shisham, deodar, walnut, and ebony. The Hindu carvers on the hills of the Himalayas still retain their elaborateness of carving, but the designs are mostly Chinese and Tibetan. In Rajputana wood-carving is mainly used in window-shutters, balcony-balustrades and door-screens. They are beautiful works of art ; the perforated tracery and flower-carving are cleverly done. Some of these carvers have the highest reputation and their works are really fine. Gujerat is about the most famous in India for wood-carving and the craft is still kept alive there though a little decadent. The Jaina style of wood-carving, as seen in Ahmedabad and Surat, is an imitation of the stone and marble carvings of earlier centuries. Jain art in Northern India reached its climax in the 11th century when some of the finest temples of Abu, Girnar, Sanganir and others were built. The dominant feature of that art was the entrance arch which was horizontal, and each succeeding layer was made to project beyond the preceding until the centre was reached. The bracket became a formative feature that governed both the character and nature of ornamentation. This has been fully copied and

imitated by the succeeding generations of wood-carvers in all their crafts. A portion of the palace at Bhavnagar is characteristic of the purest and best in the Hindu style of wood-carving in Gujerat. Their varied outline and their light grace and delicacy have to be seen to be properly appreciated. Mysore is the next famous place in modern days for this art. The sandalwood carvers copy the images in the niches and panels on the walls of the temples of the Hoysala Kings at Belur, Halebeid and Somnathpur. The bracketed pillars and massive over-door frames and architraves are all faithfully copied by the modern wood-carvers. The wood-work inside the Durbar Hall of the Amba Vilas and the beautifully carved door leading to the big Dasarah Hall of the Mysore Palace are some of the best examples of wood-carving in modern days. In the door frame runs a frieze of mythological animals garlanded with plants and flowers, making a profusion of floral ornamentation of great beauty and charm. The twistings and feather-and-fan-like expanses of foliar tails, resembling the carving on stone on the top of the entrance to the temple of Belur, are dominant features in some of the wood-works in Mysore. The carving is varied in treatment and technique ; some are done in low

relief, some in under-cutting and some in incised designs ; and the woods used are sandal, red-cedar, jackwood and Madras red-wood. The art is at present confined to a few families only, and mainly in the district of Shimoga, and it is a pity that the State has not encouraged them to any appreciable extent.

The instruments of their craft are few and simple : a saw, a plane, a mallet, a fine-grained stone and a few assorted chisels and engravers' tools ; all locally made very minute and delicate. The method of carving is also simple. The pattern is first drawn on a paper ; this is then engraved or outlined in detail on the wood ; the interspaces between the lines are next cut away in low relief ; and lastly the design itself is carved in the minutest detail by chisels of increasingly smaller and smaller sizes. In this way every effect of light and shade, curve, expression and texture is wrought.

The main difference between the wood-carvers of Gujarat and Mysore, (who are after all the best of their clan now in India,) is not in their technique nor in their *motif*, but only in the details of ornamentation. In Gujarat, for instance, the foliage in a decorative carving is large, bold, deeply and freely cut, the leaves are upturned and there is very little conventionalism and

artistic grouping. In Mysore, the foliage is pinnate, but thrown out in fanlike sprays with tips of portions rolled up. The mythological figures are designed and treated artistically. The carvings of Gods and Goddesses are common in Mysore. A splendid specimen of Mysore wood-carving is to be seen in the two wooden book-covers kept in the Jagan Mohan Chitrasala.

The art of the wood-carver and the stone-cutter is as much a national asset as the arts of the painter, musician or architect. There is as much idealism and beauty and usefulness in the crafts as in the fine arts, and in fact it is absurd to make any distinction between these various modes of creative expressions. The craftsman must be given his honoured place in the national life of a country, and where he is contented, happy and prosperous there will the Goddess of Beauty dwell to bless, purify and beautify the world. In the coming great renaissance of India there will be no first and last in these things, but equal rights and equal privileges for all.



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INDIAN TEXTILES.

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## INDIAN TEXTILES.

### A Plea for their Restoration.

INDIA'S fame spread westwards first through her arts and crafts and then through her religions and philosophies. The merchandise of Europe in the middle ages dealt largely with the beautiful cotton textiles and silk fabrics of the East and especially of India. Her art-wares were much admired in the royal courts of Europe and passed on to generations as heir-looms. Rival companies were started in all the chief trading centres of Europe to trade with India. Vast quantities of manufactured silk and cotton goods were imported from India by the Portuguese and Dutch, by Arab and British merchants in the 17th

and 18th centuries. Such was the enormous output of Indian goods into the English market in the early years of the 19th century that they had to be repressed by prohibitive duties. In 1816-17 alone India exported goods to the extent of £1,659,438. And now what is its fate ? A comparison of the manufactures of even a hundred years ago, as seen in the private collections of connoisseurs and museums in Europe, with the production of to-day, reveals a fall and degradation that is almost staggering. Not only have the industries been almost killed out, but the beautiful designs and patterns of Indian *kinkhwabs*, *bandanas* and *phulkharis* have been surreptitiously copied and reproduced in cheap and vulgar ways by machinery methods.

Sir George Birdwood was the first European to deplore this vandalism of the British traders and to raise his voice against this desecration of Indian hand-made crafts. But his voice was a voice in the wilderness. He wrote pathetically in his *Industrial Arts of India* : “ The carpets of Masulipatam were formerly the finest produced in India but of late years have also been corrupted by the European, chiefly English, demand for them. The English importers insisted on supplying the weavers with cheaper

materials, and we now find that these carpets are invariably backed with English twine. The spell of tradition thus broken, one innovation after another was introduced into the manufacture. The designs, which of old were full of beautiful detail and more varied than now in range and scheme of colouring, were surrounded by a delicate outline suggested as to tint by a harmonizing contrast with the colours with which it was in contact. But the necessity for cheap and speedily executed carpets for English use has led to the abandonment of this essential detail in all Indian ornamentation. Crude, inharmonious masses of unmeaning form now mark the spots where formerly varied, interesting and beautiful designs blossomed as delicately as the first flowers of a spring ; and these once glorious carpets of Masulipatam have sunk to a mockery and travesty of their former selves." That was only the beginning of the tragedy. The next step the European traders took was to supply the Indian craftsmen with their own wall-paper designs and patterns in the place of the beautiful, though intricate, oriental designs, which have attained a perfection and an uniqueness after centuries of evolution and practice. The monstrous degeneration of some of the Benares *kinkhwabs* can be traced to this

kindly benevolence of foreign traders ! The third step in this direction was to copy some of the decorative designs, take them to Europe to be turned out in machinery and thus compete with the hand-made crafts of India, by selling them cheap and in large quantities. Thus came the great textile industry of India to be ruined.

But the more depressing aspect is not even this cheap competition on the part of foreign traders, but the apathy, the gross indifference, the utter lack of taste and a complete degeneracy of the people of this country as a whole. The innate taste for simple and beautiful objects had long disappeared from the daily life of the Indian. The glamour of the West, with its cheap tinsels and tawdry stuffs, was too much for them to resist. Only a century and a half of education, entirely false in aims and methods, and absolutely unsympathetic to national ideals, could have effected such a result as this ! For, what is more heart-rending than to see our educated wealthy people, nobles and Maharajas, live in houses and palaces built in a style unsuited to the climate of the country and to Indian life, furnished with costly, heavy and cumbersome fittings and furnitures which are so unnatural in their surroundings, their walls

filled with cheap oleo prints from Germany and tenth-rate oil paintings from Paris and curtains of brilliant colours and crude designs from European markets and their gardens laid out in European styles which go ill with other surroundings and look so artificial and unnatural. Is it any wonder, then, that the crafts of India fell to decay and ruin ?

And now what is to be done to revive these old crafts ? Though, owing to want of patronage, sympathy and encouragement, the craftsmen have taken to other avocations, the arts are not quite dead. The same skill, patience and industry are to be seen even to-day in the few straggling workmen that carry on their traditional crafts. They now live scattered and for the most part live in abject poverty. I shall narrate here a case I came across recently. Surat, in Gujarat, has been famous for its textile industry for hundreds of years, and even now is to some extent. Its golden *kinkhwabs* and silk *patolas* are world-famous. They are wonderfully beautiful fabrics and hundreds were engaged in that industry even some two hundred years ago. And now there are only three families left who know the secret of this art. I visited one of them and saw him at work. He was making a *patola* saree to order, and he has been at it, assisted by his

son, for over two months and it would take a month more, he said. I asked him how much it would fetch him, and his reply staggered me. One hundred and twenty rupees for a saree 7 yards long, silk thread alone costing over sixty rupees and the labour of two men for three months ! That *saree* anywhere in Europe would fetch a thousand rupees. The delicacy of its colouring and the fineness of its texture were simply superb. And yet some middleman who had ordered it on behalf of some Rajah was only willing to pay a miserable sum of Rs. 120.

What must be done then to restore these beautiful crafts and to safeguard the interests of these skilled workmen ? Advantage must be taken of the present artistic renaissance that is now over the country and which has revealed to the world a new art, a new conception of beauty and a new valuation of things æsthetical. We have hitherto confined our attention mainly to the fine arts of painting, music and sculpture. A good deal has been done of late to promote the advancement of these arts. Exhibitions have been held all over India to educate the people in the arts of their country and to encourage artists. Illustrated journals have been started to do research and propaganda work in these directions. But till now

only isolated efforts have been made by a few individuals to study and to encourage the crafts of India ; no organized effort has hitherto been made to revive and re-build them. In former times, Hindu and Mussalman rulers thought it their duty to patronize, encourage and reward skilled artists in their dominions ; and the artists too rose to the occasion and produced great works of art. There were guilds of these skilled workmen in those days, with their own conventions and codes of morality to protect their interests. We must revive those ancient guild-systems for them. While attempts are being made to organize unskilled labour and to educate them to their rights and duties, powers and responsibilities, these skilled craftsmen are left to flounder as best as they can for themselves. Their lot is no better than those of unskilled labourers. It is time then that responsible leaders and public men of India did take some little interest in these men, who are a great asset to the nation and help to organize guilds for them, where they could be educated and where their work could be encouraged and patronized on a kind of co-operative basis. And over and above this, a taste for beautiful Indian objects of utility must be created among the people and the rich folk of this country be educated

to 'go in for Indian-made things.' Here is enough field to show one's patriotism and to help the cause of the Motherland. No party-politics come in here and no fear of the Government. All can help, especially the rich and the well-to-do. Will they ?

## INDIAN TEXTILES.

### (2) Palampore or Indian Printed Cloth.

THE story of the maritime enterprise of the ancient Hindus is a most fascinating theme, full of pluck, adventure, courage and endurance. Centuries before the Christian Era, the Hindus traded with Babylon, Nineveh, Egypt, Greece and with other civilized nations of those days, which are mere names to-day. An ancient tradition has it that a great migration of Hindus from South India went and colonized Egypt and civilized it in the dim past of our world's history. India's (or *Aryadesha*, as it should properly be called) far-flung colonies in the East, the great kingdoms of

Champa, Cambodia, Siam and Java, still bear the impress of her civilization, culture and arts. Aryavarta's colonizing capacity in those days was great and unique ; it practically extended from Tarim Basin and Khotan Valley in the west to Sumatra and Java in the east, and from the Gobi Desert in the north to the Isle of Ceylon in the south. Though her conquest and domination of the then well-known world were mainly spiritual and cultural, yet there was much commercial intercourse between the Motherland and her distant colonies. " Indian culture, according to the poet, is a full-blown flower. With a favourable wind, the seeds of the flower are blown over to different tracts of land. Wherever the seed could find favourable ground, there another tree would grow up with flowers and buds. Thus, in the Indian cultural empire, the central flower is India from where seeds have flown to China, Tibet, Corea, Japan, Siam, Annam, Cambodia, Java and Bali." The old superstition, foisted on the credulous public mind by the unimaginative orientalists, scholars, historians and missionaries, that the natural frontiers of India, the Himalayas in the north and the seas on the other three sides, confined her civilization within the mainland itself, is now an exploded myth, thanks to the

efforts of archæologists, art-students and travellers. That India once possessed an unrivalled supremacy in sea-trade, in the far-off days, and that her vast sea-front was studded with great emporiums and seaports, cannot now be questioned. Archæologists are daily discovering coins of Roman Cæsars, Persian Monarchs and other unknown denominations, testifying to the extent of her trade and even to the tracing of foreign settlers in the country. Takshashila, Nalanda, Ujjain, Vikramasila, Kanouj, Kashi and Kanchi attracted crowds of scholars, philosophers, metaphysicians, logicians, mathematicians and poets from distant lands, and in like manner India's seafaring coast towns like Kaveripumpatnam, Pamban, Nagapatnam, Masulipatam, Calicut, Surat and others attracted large crowds of traders, merchant men, soldiers and adventurers. There was not a time in India's history when her fabulous wealth and magnificent civilization did not arouse the cupidity of the other nations of the world. The very discovery of the New World was due to India's far-famed wealth and her Golden Pagoda Trees, which Columbus wanted to shake and fill his coffers full. The true story of India's past commercial enterprise yet remains to be written, but fragments of information

can now and then be got in an attempt to study the precious hand-crafts and cottage industries of olden days.

One such industry for which India was (and even now is) famous was the manufacturing of cotton prints, popularly known as *palampores* in South India, and *palangpos* (bed-cover) in Northern India. This craft has been in vogue in this country from the very earliest times. Some European art-critics have traced its origin to Persia and are disposed to think that they were introduced here by the early Persian settlers. It cannot be the whole truth, however much Persian influence can be traced in the designs of these printed cloths. It is possible that the Hindu and Mussalman printers copied various floral and bird designs, including the beautiful "Tree of Life" pattern from Persian craftsmen, but the art itself is very old in India, at any rate in the south. There is a reference to printed cloth banners being used in festival processions in that great Tamil classic, *Manimekhala*, which is over twelve hundred years old. There are villages in the south even to-day, where this work is carried on traditionally from time immemorial which do not show any sign of non-Hindu influence in their environment, not to speak of Persian.

Further, the printed chintzes of India are recognized by competent critics to rival those of Persia in delicacy and minuteness of pattern. Though the cotton prints of the Punjab resemble, in pattern, texture and finish, those of Teheran, the more indigenous chintzes of Masulipatam bear a distinct Hindu hall-mark. As has been rightly observed by Sir William Jones, "In these manufactures of cotton they (the Hindus) still surpass all the world."

This industry is even now widely spread in India. Sindh and Gujerat are well-known for this trade. The women of Gujerat prefer printed cotton sarees to embroidered ones. Sindh produces gold and silver printed cloths for door curtains and table cloths. In the Punjab, they are used for bed-covers (*palangpos*) and padded-quilts to keep off the cold ; in Bengal too they have cotton prints for sacerdotal purposes ; and in Southern India there are many centres with their special features and peculiar designs, but the finest calico prints of South India are from the ancient Bunder, modern Masulipatam.

It is universally admitted that the printers of Bunder *Palampores* had a wonderful perception of the combination of colours and a taste for simple and chaste designs. Their special value lay in the sober

and pleasing tints of colour they used out of their indigenous vegetable dyes, instead of the cheaper, brighter, fugitive aniline pigments of to-day. The *Chhipis* of Agra and Delhi, the *Khatris* of Sindh and Gujarat, the *Sourashtras* of Madura, all these used natural dyes for cotton and silks, all through the ages, till the East India Company came with its destructive merchandise and its chemical anilines. From that time began the deterioration of all beautiful crafts in India. Bunder *Palampores* were once largely exported to Europe, and, till very recently, to Persia in large quantities. Now such exports are a thing of the past, and even the little trade that is now going on with Burma and the Straits will soon cease as commercial greed and cheap competition have set in.

There were two classes of *palampores* in demand : one for secular purposes, such as *dhotis*, *sarees*, *rumals*, *razais* and *odhanis* (all these made for the use of Muhammadan settlers in Burma, the Straits and in the Arabian ports) ; and the other for special religious purposes of the Hindus such as, canopies over the images of Gods, banners in front of religious processions and cloths to drape the car in which the images of gods are taken in procession. The former kind of printed cloths were chiefly made in Masulipatam,

Cocanada, Nagore, Kumbakonam, Paramagudi and Pamban, while the latter kind were manufactured largely in Kalahasti, Salem, Palakollu and Wallajanagar. What was once a flourishing trade and a beautiful cottage industry, which brought wealth and fame to the country is now in the hands of a few hereditary dyers and printers who find it difficult to eke out a decent living. The genius, skill, patience, industry are all still there awaiting recognition, patronage, encouragement and sympathy. The cheap tinsels of Europe have cast a glamour over the eyes and minds of our educated and well-to-do men and the skilled craftsmen of the country, with their beautiful hand-crafts, are left to themselves to face utter extinction. Indian patriotism has run riot in one direction, politics ; the other salient and life-giving national aspects are left to flounder as best as they can. India's immediate need is as much *industrial development, artistic revival, economic stability* as *political independence*. Would that our national leaders were more sane and all-round thinking men than lop-sided political maniacs !

A word now as to the process of these printed cloths. The plain white cotton cloth is first soaked in a preparation of milk and gall-nuts. After the cloth

is dry, the outlines of the designs required are either printed with a block or drawn by hand with a crude brush in black ink, a preparation of alum and iron. Then the red colour is applied by block, and to bring out the colour and to make it permanent the cloth is boiled repeatedly. The next colour, blue or green, or yellow, as the case may be, is then applied, while such portions of the design as are required to remain red are covered with wax so that the original colour is left uninjured. Similar processes are repeated for more colours ; but generally there are not more than four colours used. The red is extracted from a herb known in Tamil as *Seruver*, which grows wild in sandy soils ; the blue of indigo is commonly known and used for its purity ; yellow colour is made from the seeds of a water plant, and green is obtained by the mixture of yellow with the indigo blue. The colours thus prepared and printed remain fresh, sober and permanent. The designs are varied and interesting. The *palampores* of Masulipatam have mostly floral designs, conventional representations of trees covered with flowers, parrots, peacocks ; in others, a river flowing at the foot of a tree, and tigers and other wild beasts prowling round underneath. The outlines are at times crude and unfinished, and when

you consider the labour involved and the cheapness of the price, these faults are nothing. There are other *palampores* with figures of gods and goddesses, or scenes from *Ramayana* or *Mahabharata*. They are rich in tones of red, blue and yellow against the narrow strips of white ground on which inscriptions are to be seen. Such pieces take over two months' labour and the prices demanded are ridiculously low. The present revival, it is to be hoped, will restore the old glory of this beautiful art-craft.

## MIRROR OF INDIAN ART

### INDIAN TEXTILES.

#### (3) Patola, the Famous Silk Fabric of Pattan.

SURAT textiles have long held a deservedly high place in the estimation of both Indians and Europeans ; her *kinkhwabs*, *bandanas* and *patolas* were among the choicest exports that the merchandise of the Middle Ages brought to the markets of Samarkhand, Bokhara, Damascus, Rome and other capitals of Europe in the West, and as far as Java and Siam in the East. Surat of those days was one of the most important seaports of the then world, and her commerce was varied and interesting. During the Mughal Period of Indian History, it was a great

thriving capital city, with a cosmopolitan population of Arabs, Persians, Turks, Egyptians, Abyssinians and Europeans, with their respective trades and craft-guilds. A standing army was stationed there by the Mughal emperors to safeguard her internal trade interests, and a navy defended her coast and river-front from piracy. Surat was the Gateway to India ; her fame, wealth and industry have been well known in other lands. But the fame of the weavers of Pattan and Surat have long preceded the wealth and beauty of Surat.

The chief textile industry for which it was world-famous was the manufacturing of a kind of silk fabric known as *Patola*. It was not an indigenous hand-craft but was introduced by the Arab settlers, which was subsequently taken up by the weavers of Champaner, the ancient capital of the Panch-Mahals, who came and settled down in Surat somewhere about the 15th century when the latter city became a great emporium of the world, and who developed and enriched this art of *Patola* weaving. Since that time this industry has been in the hands of Hindu weavers though they still depend upon the Arab descendants of the Arab settlers there for the dyeing of the threads. It is a secret which the latter are not

willing to reveal to the Hindu weavers. The weaving itself is such a tedious, complicated and difficult process that the dyers of the yarn are quite helpless without the weavers. They are mutually dependent upon each other, and their respective skill and secret are only imparted to their respective successors in the art. Hence this *patola* manufacturing is not widely practised nor is it manufactured to any large extent. In the heyday of its trade, there were only about 50 dyers and about 100 weavers, and the demand was so great, I was told, that they had to work day and night to execute their orders. The price paid for a fine piece of this fabric was nearly four or five times the prices that are now paid. When I visited Surat recently and enquired about the present state of this textile industry, I was assured that there were not more than half a dozen of these weavers still carrying on this precious trade. I visited two of them, who live in such abject poverty and in astounding obscurity in spite of their gift and skill, and though a loom was not then working, they very kindly offered to show me the process of weaving a *patola* for my edification the next day. I enquired as to the time and cost of making one good silk *patola* and I was astounded with their reply. "It takes,"

the elder of them said to me, "over two months to complete one silk saree and the actual cost of the silk thread, dyeing, etc., come to over rupees hundred and fifty. We need two men at least to work at the loom from morn till night and we do not get more than fifty rupees net profit over each saree." The saddest part of their story was the business of the middle-man who takes considerable commission from both sides for getting orders. It is really a shame that these skilled workmen should be thus neglected and a beautiful art-craft allowed to die a natural death. Some efforts ought to be made to create a guild of these workmen which will safeguard their interests and promote their industry.

*Patola* is a silk marriage saree, given usually as a wedding present to the bride by her maternal uncle. This beautiful custom is becoming obsolete now owing to the rarity of the fabric as well as because of the glamour of the cheap, fine machine-made silk cloths imported from the West. Fortunately the love for beautiful home-made fabrics is not absolutely dead among the people of Gujerat and they still preserve these precious heir-looms very reverentially and with great care. How could the love of the beautiful ever die in a people who exhibit such an innate taste and

skill for colour harmony, line rhythm, infinite variety of design and pattern as in their folk-art, *Rangoli*, which is of such unique charm ?

The making of a *patola* on a loom is, as has been observed before, a very difficult and complicated process. First the threads of the warp and weft are separately tied and dyed by what is called the bandana process, *i.e.*, *tie-and-dye* process or *knot-dyeing* like the turbans of Rajputana or sarees of Madura. The dyer takes a little bundle of the thread of the warp which has been dyed in the lightest colour found on the warp in the finished piece, and draws in pencil upon it some lines at measured distances according to the pattern to be produced. Another man then ties the silk along the spaces marked tightly round with cotton thread, so that the colour will not penetrate. It is then dyed in the next darker colour found upon the warp and the process is repeated till the required colour is reached. The weft is then treated in the same way in order that in the loom, when it crosses the warp, each of its colour may exactly come in contact with the same colour in the warp. The bundles of warp have next to be arranged in the loom by the weaver who takes the little bundles of weft one at a time, using each in its own place throughout the

design. The work needs a very concentrated attention. The colourings of *patola* are of great delicacy and the designs are very charming. The weavers show great taste in the use of red, golden-yellow and white, not only in the disposition of the design but in their respective tones to give a harmonious effect. When finished it is a perfect piece of fabric at once pleasing to the eyes and comforting to the mind. No wonder Oriental monarchs and European connoisseurs have cherished its possession very much !

## **MIRROR OF INDIAN ART**

### **INDIAN TEXTILES.**

#### **(4) Cashmere Shawls.**

**W**HO has not heard of the Vale of Cashmere with its lovely roses and lovelier women, its green meadows and crystal-clear lakes, its snow-clad peaks and shady chenar trees, its rich luscious fruits and sweet-scented flowers, its magnificent pleasure-parks and beautiful pine-mantled side-valleys, its floating gardens and its glistening glaciers ? Where on this wide earth is there a more enchanting beauty-spot than this Happy Valley, the pleasure-garden of the ancient Moghuls and the playground of the modern Europeans, a veritable paradise on earth ? Who

that has once seen this silver-girt valley in its spring glory or autumnal splendour, with its riotous colours of gorgeous flowers, green lawns, leaf-laden trees and babbling brooks or who that has once be-sported with unfettered joy under the cool shades of the Nassim Bagh by the water-edge of the Dhal Lake or played about the terraced gardens of Shalimar, rich with the sweet memories of the romance of Lala Rookh, or idly paddled about the sleepy but treacherous waters of the Lake Manasbal on a tiny shikara boat, can ever forget the magical charm of Cashmere ? But more than these natural beauties, it is the art-crafts of Cashmere that make a more irresistible appeal to a student of æsthetics. Cashmere's art-wares are as far-famed as her natural sceneries, and though few have been to this delightful spot, many have seen, appreciated and treasured her wonderful cottage-crafts. From the very ancient times Cashmere had a romantic attraction to the outside world. The fame of her beautiful women, her fabulous wealth and her delicate art-wares have ever roused the cupidity of her neighbours and the history of Cashmere is a long tale of conquests and invasions with their attendant sorrows and misery. While nature rejoices there with

butonteous gifts of beautiful things, man alone is miserable and, as Heber puts it, this is the spot “where every prospect pleases, and only man is vile”.

The ancient history of Cashmere is mostly lost in traditions. The only historical record of her past is Kalahana's *Rajatarangini*. That Asoka and Kanishka ruled over the land is evident from monuments and inscriptions; that the Greeks influenced her ancient arts is obvious from the architectural remains of the temples of Martand and Pandrathen; her history during the Muhammadan period had been a chequered one with bright and dark sides to it. How ancient is the art of weaving, dyeing, embroidering, carving and carpet-making in that vale, it is difficult to say, but from the living art-crafts it is certain that Chinese and Persian arts have played considerable part in influencing the indigenous arts of Cashmere. However bad, politically and socially, the Islamic conquest of Cashmere may have been, artistically it has been very advantageous to the people.

- There are many cottage industries for which Cashmere has been famous for a very long time. Weaving of *Pashmina Pattu* cloth out of the soft

wool of young lambs, dyeing of soft delicate shades of colours for which the Kashmiri women are so world-famous, embroidering beautiful patterns on woollen and silk cloths, making papier-mache bowls and vases of exquisite pattern and colours, and carving delightful designs on doors, trays, teapoys, boxes and frames, these are some of the well-known crafts of Cashmere. But the most well-known and universally admired product is, of course, Cashmere Shawls, which are and have ever been the real wealth of Cashmere. They have been the treasured possessions of princes and nobles in India and even outside India ; they have been passed on as heir-looms from generation to generation both in the East and the West. Next, perhaps, to the Benares *kinkhwabs* the Cashmere shawls were in the greatest demand in the royal courts of India. Kings honoured their distinguished guests, scholars and statesmen with such shawls. Even to-day that practice is in vogue in many durbars. Though the art has decayed for want of patronage and due to the degeneracy of the public taste, yet it still maintains its dignity. It is indeed very difficult to produce shawls of the old type and design though the traditional weaving, dyeing and embroidering are still carried on in a mechanical manner. A born

Kashmiri, man or woman, has more colour-sense and colour-feeling than others born outside the valley, and it is this subtle knowledge of colour distinctions and colour variations and colour blendings that gives them superiority over others. Where an ordinary man sees four shades of colour a Kashmiri man sees a few shades more, and it is this extra vision of colour-range that makes him enable to blend colours in so wonderfully rich and harmonious manner. The keenness of the sight is still there, the skill of the fingers is there, the patience and the traditional discipline are yet there, but they are all misdirected in producing cheap, crude and inferior stuffs for foreign consumption. No native art can really be true or great when it is produced for foreigners' appreciation, for any art which is chiefly concerned with supplying the demand of curio-hunters and cheap art-dealers, who are really out of touch and sympathy with either the producers or the produced, must always be artificial and vulgar. It is as evil a thing for India to supply Europe or America with crudely designed fabrics or art-wares, done anyhow and in any manner, for mass consumption, as it is for British Mills to send to India bales of cotton sarees or cloths with vulgar patterns like cycles, motor cars,

fountain pens and so forth. The most deplorable thing both with regard to Benares brocades and Cashmere shawls is that instead of the old beautiful oriental designs, common-place wall paper patterns from Europe are mostly used. They have not only made these textiles cheap but they are positively inartistic. Over fifty years ago both Sir George Watts and Sir George Birdwood drew the attention of the Indian public and the art-lovers in Europe to this sad state of affairs and condemned the apathy and the indifference of the public and the Government towards these beautiful art-objects. I shall have occasion to refer to this again in my article on the brocades of Benares. As observed before, the old designs and colourings are fast disappearing and it is only in the private collections of the Maharajas and the Museums that these old shawls are now to be seen. And what a contrast they make with the present manufacture of shawls both within the valley or in the Punjab where a large trade is being carried on in this line. Let us briefly study the present industry of Cashmere shawls and see if there is any future for this precious textile in India. During my previous two visits to Cashmere and in my recent visits to the Punjab early this year, I took the opportunity to

make a special study of this art, with the aid of a friend who is both a student of science and a dealer in Cashmere shawls, who not only educated me theoretically but illustrated to me every bit of information that he was able to give with precious examples from his collection. 'I do not know if a detailed study of the art of manufacturing Cashmere shawls has been made before for the edification of laymen, but it is my hope that the present study, briefly sketched out here, will help many to appreciate the beauty and the art of making these shawls.

Cashmere shawls are generally made of two kinds of woollen materials, one imported from Europe and the other country-made. The imported materials come mostly from France in pieces of 30 yards and of various widths, white in colour and the texture varies from rough surface to finer ones. They are first sent to the washerman for being washed with soap before they are sent to the dyer. The country-made materials are sometimes made of imported yarns and sometimes mixed with silk to get a better surface effect. When the yarn is silk and wool but country-made, it is called *Rampuri*; when it is mixed with cotton, it is called *Garbhi*. The latter is not generally used for embroidery. The real country-made

is called *Asli*, and is manufactured from the wool imported from Yarkand, and the wool is got from the down of little lambs. The finest out of them is taken for the yarn which is spun by the women-folk in the cottages and is worked on pit-looms. *Asli* is of two colours, one, the natural colour (dark-brown or rat colour) and the other is dyed in various colours or bleached with sulphur for white. When this yarn is combined with some foreign yarn it is called *Raffletani*. So much for the yarns used ; now for dyeing. Imported ones are dyed in chemical colours in boiling water. The colours are generally bright and there are a great number of variety of shades. The *Asli* yarn is dyed both in chemical and vegetable colours ; the colours being of very soft and light shades. The third stage is embroidery. Both silk and wool are used for the purpose ; now-a-days artificial silk is also used and this is generally done on machines in very bright colours for common use, and they are the cheapest. They are called *Machini Lohis*. A better variety than this is what is called *Charhashia*. It is made of wool, sometimes with rough designs and sometimes with fine designs, of many colours, generally mixed with silk and cotton threads. Often imported borders from Sweden and

Germany are used and at the corners little native embroidery is done.

The most striking features about these shawls are the elaborate designs in harmonious colours that one sees on them. First the outlines of these designs are printed by wooden blocks in black colour, then they are embroidered on with needle and thread both by men and women. Gold work is generally done by women. There are designs where more than one person work and this joint-work never spoils the pattern or the colour-scheme. Designs are of varied nature, but mostly leaves, flowers, creepers and birds ; chenar leaf is one of the prettiest *motif* for design. There are a variety of such designs with their own appropriate names. (1) *Kandukar*, made of woollen thread, big and rough stitches with betel-leaf design. One corner finely done and the rest three crude and rough. (2) *Chhatkingri*, a little finer in stitches and in work, but nearly the same design as the first one. When all the corners are embroidered equally fine and with the same design, it is called *Eksar* ; when all the corners are not equally embroidered, it is called *Farukdhar*. (3) *Tirikar* is a design in many colours, round flowers and rich colouring. In this also are *Eksar* and *Farukdhar*. (4) *Margolikar*, generally

done in black thread and the embroidery is very fine, but not broad. Any design is available. (5) *Kalamkar*, of many designs, in various shades either one side embroidery (*Ekrokha*) or on both sides (*Dorokha*). The sun-flower is the common design and generally of one colour. The embroidery is commonly done in cotton threads. (6) *Gamlekar*, in wool on white ground, rough and fine work ; the general design is flower-pot. There are other varieties of this type which are called *Chinikar*, *Gulabchini*, *Mohurkar*, *Zulfikar*, *Ashakmashuk*, *Leila Majnu*, all these are generally done in black or black brown or blue black, with little red sprinklings here and there, on white ground generally. (7) *Zemindar*, (8) *Ambker*, (9) *Andaker*, these are generally in demand in Southern India ; are of bright colours with too much embroidery, the ground surface often not visible under the embroidery, which is often worked with cotton threads. (10) *Jugnikar*, fine needle work, of old design, green leaves and flowers prominent, designs of variegated flowers done in wool and cotton threads. The stitches are very fine, and one striking colour is the leaf-green. (11) *Panchbarag*, the stitching is very very fine, the leaves are more prominent and beautiful and are shown in clusters of five.

(12) *Gulbahar*, the flowers and leaves are here seen in more natural colours than in any other embroidery, and they are of many varieties. *Chenar* leaf is a common design. Sometimes various designs are combined together to get better results. All the above mentioned shawls are *Ekr̥khas* or single side embroidered ones. The *Dorokhas* are of many varieties and of beautiful designs ; embroidered on both sides, and most popular among the educated people in India. The patterns are generally of *Charhashia*, small bordered and fine needle work. *Dordar* are of different designs with white border ; *Paledar* are of many colours with big borders. *Asli* is real Cashmere work, either by needle or is woven. The borders are separately woven and are then attached to the cloth in such a fine way as not to be easily visible. Sometimes all the pieces are embroidered. *Ekrokha* is used for coating, choga, etc., and *Dorokha* is used as *Chadder* or shawl. Among the designers of these old real Cashmere shawls, the name of Pundit Naksha Noorudīn stands foremost. He was a great artist who lived about 50 years ago, and has designed some wonderfully beautiful patterns. His designs fetch a high price and are valued most by the connoisseurs. I have in my possession a fine sample of Noorudīn

shawl, a real old pashmina, of exquisite design and colouring, a perfect piece of art. There are other kinds of *Dorokha* shawls with embroideries of two different colours on either side, and at times even the colours on both sides of the cloth are not the same. *Taulia* shawls are plain on one side and embroidered, while the reverse side is like Turkish bath towels. *Shikarkar* is the name given to shawls with birds and animals designs. *Zari* shawls are generally made of foreign imported cloth of heavy and good texture, and the colours are bright, deep red, deep blue, deep green and bottle green. The gold thread is attached for embroidery with yellow thread. The design is generally in concentric circles and sometimes silk flowers are shown. The borders are wide, and after the embroidery is done they are beaten with a wooden club in order to give them polish. The old Cashmere shawls were made of materials from the valley itself, the patterns were intricate, of dull colours, and sometimes the embroideries were made of small pieces and then sewn together in a very fine manner to appear as a single piece. Old shawls are generally *Ekrokhas*. In the production of a fine piece of shawl more than a family are generally engaged in, each with his or her allotted task. The embroiderer is

called *Jupgar*; the *Rafoogur* gives the finishing touch and attaches the proper borders and presses them on a wooden contrivance called *Charak*. Then they are ready for the market. Next to Cashmere, Amritsar in the Punjab is the second big centre in India for this trade. With little more cultivated taste and love for the really beautiful and oriental in design this art-craft can easily be revived and restored to its past glory.

## MIRROR OF INDIAN ART

### INDIAN TEXTILES.

#### (5) Benares Kinkhwabs.

“INDIAN native gentlemen and ladies should make it a point of culture never to wear any clothing or ornaments but of native manufacture and strictly native design, constantly purified by comparison with the best examples and the models furnished by the sculptors of Amaravati, Sanchi and Barhut.” In these words, Sir George Birdwood, who was a great lover of Indian culture and art, exhorted the Indians of his day, nearly fifty years ago, to take an intelligent interest in the arts of their country, which were even then in the process of decaying, and to

be genuine *swadeshists* in the encouragement of old Indian arts and crafts. That appeal was of course in vain. The glamour of Western Civilization was too powerful then to see things clearly and in their right perspective. The educated Indians of those days went even so far as to argue that "if it is right for Europeans to admire Indian patterns, why is it not right for Indians to make use of European patterns ?" But the fault was not in either admiring or adopting foreign fashions, but in foolishly and slavishly imitating without meaning or consideration. If, for instance, the English dress appears "unlovely and absurd " on Indians (as it most assuredly does in the majority of cases) and very uncomfortable, unhygienic and uneconomical in the tropical heat of India (as everyone that wears the dress knows to his cost and experience), it is not that that dress is "unlovely or absurd " but that it is unsuited to the conditions of the country and the people. Even this would not be bad if a little more taste and discretion were used in the choice of foreign articles and appreciation of their real utility and beauty. There are a thousand and one things made in India which are extremely pretty and useful, and it is only when foreign stuffs are imported in preference to native goods that the

action becomes snobbish and stupid, not to say most unpatriotic. Indians are, as a race, undisciplined and unprincipled, and it is nowhere more glaring than in their attitude towards their own beautiful art-crafts. As Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy says somewhere : “The fact that we are ruled by a foreign nation need not compel us to acquire a foreign mind,” but most unfortunately that is the tragedy of Indian life and arts. Even the great national movements started with such patriotic fervour and worked with such zeal and enthusiasm left this side of national life absolutely untouched. “ What has Swadeshi done for Indian Arts ? ”, asked Dr. Coomaraswamy years ago, and answered it himself most pathetically, “ Almost nothing ; when a decaying industry can be used to political advantage it gives it loud support, and in this way the hand-loom industry of Bengal is receiving attention now ; but the whole country from north to south is full of decaying industries and perishing hereditary skill, to save which no effort is made. Efforts are made to establish all sorts of factories for making soap, matches, cotton, nibs, biscuits and what not, while the men who can still weave, still build, still work in gold and silver, copper and wood and stone, are starving because their work

is out of fashion. Swadeshi often ignores the things which India has from time immemorial made perfectly and seeks to manufacture things which it would be better to do without altogether, or to frankly buy from other countries more able to make them easily."

Thus the causes for the degeneration of Indian crafts are both external and internal. The foreign domination for over a century and a half, the apathy and the indifference of the Government, nay, the positive discouragement of Indian production where it competed with the British goods by prohibitive duties, the importation of cheap tinsels to catch the fancy of a poverty-stricken nation, these were some of the external causes that led to the ruination of what once was commercially a progressive nation. The internal causes were many, but the chief of them being the degenerate taste and the slave-mentality of the average Indian who looked down on everything Indian as inferior to everything imported from Europe. So far is an ancient tale ; I re-tell it here only to awaken the interest of Young India in this much neglected aspect of our national life. Let us for a moment consider here the present condition of what once was a glorious art-heritage and a great national industry, the art of manufacturing gold

cloths, brocades and laces, popularly known as *Kinkhwabs*. Of all the precious textiles manufactured in India, this held the highest place and was in great demand even outside India. The Dacca Muslins, Sindh *Phulkharis*, Cashmere Shawls, Surat *Patolas*, Rajput *Bandanas*, and Benares *Kinkhwabs*, were some of the indigenous goods which were exported in large quantities from India by the Arabs, the Dutch, Portuguese and British merchants in the 17th and 18th centuries. The Indian royalties have ever been great lovers and patrons of these old fabrics and even to-day, in spite of their denationalization and decadent state, the Indian rulers still cherish these old beautiful things, though they do not patronize or encourage them to any extent. These *Kinkhwabs* were not only in great demand but were used for several purposes. Royal robes, royal umbrellas, throne coverings, palace curtains and window screens, bed covers and pillows, chudders and dhoties, sarees and cholies, all these were made of golden brocades, of different designs and colours. Some of the old patterns were remarkably original, highly artistic and extremely delightful. Some of them were made of pure gold thread but of very fine texture ; some were elaborately designed and richly

coloured. The old craftsmen were skilled designers and they delighted in creating strikingly beautiful patterns of decorative kind in an intricate way. They ensembled flowers, leaves, fruits, creepers, birds and animals in a most admirable manner to form a delightful mosaic or decorative piece of work. There was no over-elaborateness or unnecessary details. There was a sense of rhythm and harmony in the whole composition ; no loud colour or strong contrast anywhere ; there was a noble restraint which is a test of a great art. The textures were as soft and smooth as silk and the finish superfine. The gold threads were beaten and drawn as fine as any cotton yarn, and this was specially noticeable in old gold or silver *tissue* cloths or sarees. The method of "drawing-out" gold threads is very interesting though slow and laborious. After the gold is beaten out to the needed length and size, it is then made to pass through eye-holes of ever decreasing dimensions till the thread becomes finer and finer and finer like any cotton or woollen thread, and then it is worked on a hand-loom for weaving purposes. Cloths of various sizes, of exquisite workmanship and delightful patterns turned out of these looms under the loving care and devoted attention of those old *Kinkhwab* manufacturers.

And what is the present state of this industry ? Artistically nothing ; commercially cheap. There is still demand for this kind of work and there are enough producers of *Kinkhwab* even to-day. Benares is still the chief centre of its manufacture though Surat and other places produce *Kinkhwab* of a kind. But the saddest part of its present condition is its cheapness, crudity and common-place designs copied senselessly from the West. The art is completely deteriorated, and mass production is the result. The old designs are obsolete, and in their places inferior European designs and English wall paper patterns have come to stay. This monstrous degeneracy and deterioration of a beautiful art-craft was noticed even as early as 1879 when an address signed by such eminent artists of England as William Morris, Edward Burne-Jones, J. Millais, Monier Williams, Edwin Arnold and others was presented to Sir George Birdwood, pleading for the arresting of "the rapid deterioration that has of late befallen the great historical arts of India". Sir George Watts was one of the first to observe this depressing aspect and he writes in his book "Indian Art at Delhi": "While examining a large series of old designs, one of the chief *Kinkhwab* manufacturers

expressed amusement at the interest shown in worthless old mica sketches, long out of fashion. He explained that he possessed a book of great value from which all his most successful designs had, for some years past, been taken. On being desired to show this treasured pattern book he produced a sample book of English wall papers. .... This at once explained the monstrous degeneration perceived in the Benares *Kinkhwabs*. .... not in Benares only, but throughout India the fine old art designs that have been attained after centuries of evolution are being abandoned and models utterly unsuited and far inferior artistically are being substituted." This substitution of inferior wall paper patterns is the main feature of the present-day *Kinkhwab* industry. Any amount of remonstration, persuasion and pleading for the restoration of old designs and copying of old patterns with the manufacturers (as the writer of this article has repeatedly attempted) are of no avail. The one solid excuse both the manufacturer and the dealer ever give is that the old patterns are not in demand and that the taste of the public warrant productions of this kind. The producer and the dealer are willing to have the old designs copied, provided the public are educated to appreciate the

really beautiful things in fabrics and provided their tastes change for the better. And so it is the educated Indian public who are responsible for the present degeneracy of our arts and it is they who must be educated to buy, wear and patronize swadeshi manufactures because they are better, more beautiful and more enduring than others. It is not enough to shout for *Swaraj*, for real *Swaraj* will not come till there is real *Swadeshi* and *Swadharma* in the land. ‘Let India supply the world again with beautiful fabrics, holding the market by sheer superiority of design and workmanship—a thing still possible if the existing traditional capacity of Indian craftsmen were rightly organized. There is a real demand in other lands for things worth making, things made well (for the sake of the fine quality of material, and still more for the art qualities of the accomplished work), it should still be possible for those who can work much cheaper (and could still command the services of craftsmen possessing hereditary skill sufficient to make the fortune of any manufacturer in Europe), to find a market for their own best work. The aim must be for quality, not quantity. There is no country in the world where so much capacity for design and workmanship exists ; but we are recklessly

flinging this, almost our greatest treasure, to the winds, and with it all spontaneous expression in art. It is not worth being a nation at all or making any attempt at political freedom, if India is to remain in the end enslaved at heart by purely material ideals. The national movement has no justification if it does not carry with it some hope of a new manifestation of the Indian genius in relation to the vital things of life."

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STUDIES IN RAJPUT PAINTING.

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## **MIRROR OF INDIAN ART**

### **STUDIES IN RAJPUT PAINTING.**

#### **Historical.**

IT is but natural that, for the purposes of a correct estimate and proper study of so vast a subject as Indian Art, covering over a period of two thousand years and more, and comprising as many styles, schools, types and expressions of art as it is possible to conceive, students and critics divide it into definite eras or periods ; but in this, there is always a fear of being too rigid and dogmatic. These divisions, as all students will admit, are only arbitrary, and are based on scholars' speculations and researches and archæologists' finds. Pre-Buddhistic period,

Buddhistic period, Kushan period, Mauriyan and Post-Mauriyan periods, Gupta period, Mathura School, Gandharan School, Sanchi-Barhut styles, all these indicate to the student of Indian Art a rough outline of the development of the Fine Arts in this country. In most cases, the names were given arbitrarily by the first researcher or the pioneer in the field, and the name sticks to them in spite of its wrong appellation or connotation, as further investigations disclose. There is really nothing final in the statements that critics make, and the last word can never be said with regard to the past history of the arts of any country, much less with regard to those of India. Though the superstition that "India is a country without a history" is knocked on the head by the researches of epigraphists, archaeologists and students of Indian Art, yet our knowledge of India's past will always remain fragmentary, one-sided, meagre and confusing, considering its vast antiquity and the mass of materials available, which are too overwhelming to be easily disposed of. Indian Art has suffered much for want of this understanding on the part of its early students, who ever emphasized the *formal* side of India's artistic expression and often missed its inner or vital life-expression. The one great message that India has

ever given right down the ages, through her religions, philosophies, arts and sciences, has been that stupendous truth, the Unity of Life, and therefore, the unity of her arts ; and it is strange that almost all the early European scholars, who did such magnificent work to interpret India to the West, managed to miss that fundamental fabric of India's thought and life. It is only the latter-day students like Goetz, Havell, Cousins and others who were able to sense and intuit this great secret of India.

The above preliminary remarks are necessary for a correct and proper estimation of the subject under study. The Rajput School of Painting is one of the most significant and outstanding artistic achievements of Mediæval India, but it is not an isolated achievement of a particular period in Indian History. Whatever may be the originality and the peculiarity of a work of art, it is rarely in isolated work ; it is explained by anterior works, and is justified by the contemporary ones. The Hindu art of Rajput painting is a direct descendant of the Buddhistic art of Ajanta, and in spite of the seeming differences in mannerisms, style, size and expression, the underlying unity of both these arts is the same. It is true that the art of Ajanta is more highly developed, more naturalistic

and richer in composition than the sixteenth century art of Rajputana and of the Punjab and foot-hills of the Himalayas, which is primitive in style. But, nevertheless, both styles are nearly the same ; the difference in expression need not belie their common genius. Even the art of Ajanta was not an isolated factor. It had its antecedent, and is the direct outcome of the creative genius of the Guptas. The Gupta Empire was most powerful then, reigning over the greater part of India, whose cultural rule expanded over the whole of the known world, to China and Japan, to Turkestan and Rome, to Cambodia and Java. It was the Golden Age of India. Its greatest poets were Kalidas, Dandi, Amaru and Bhartrihari. Its special achievements were in sculpture and painting. Ajanta was the epitome of that culture. Its last great king was Harshavardhana ; and with his death, India soon fell into decay and degeneracy, and her greatness vanished for many, many centuries. The whole of Northern and Middle India fell into the hands of less cultured but more warlike dynasties, and new kingdoms were founded in the Punjab, in Gujerat, in Rajasthan, in Bengal and along the lower valleys of the Himalayas. These were the ancestors of the Rajput clans. The history of Mediæval

India, from the twelfth century to the eighteenth, is a history of the struggles, wars, achievements and cultural conquests of these races. The ideals, thoughts, aspirations and feelings of a people are best reflected in their arts, and we find in the arts of this time, a new development, a new tendency, a new expression, but fundamentally Indian in character and genius. The painting of this period imitates the marvellous frescoes of Ajanta, but while the latter were large wall paintings of rich composition, here, during this period, they were done in miniatures and for book-illustrations. The art was not so much religious as courtly. When the Thakurs and the Ranas became more and more independent, and firmly established themselves as powerful rulers, the art was filled with a new vitality and feeling. Though the primitive style remained, the colourings became more fine and harmonious, and the human figures were more delicate, refined and sensitive. These were the days of romance, chivalry and heroism, of Padmini, Rupmati, Mira and others. Rajasthan was a world of castles and hill-forts, a world of knighthood and chivalry. And just as the Knights of Europe worshipped their Ladies, so the Rajputs plighted their word of honour to protect, help, shield,

fight and die for the women who had given them the *Rakhi* (bracelet). Woman became one of the *motifs* of their art, and soon "worship of woman" became almost an artistic cult. Women inspired the art of Ajanta as well, but they were women of a sensuous type and mundane feeling. In the languorous poses of their bodies, in the coquettish looks in their eyes, in the fascinating gestures of their hands, in the well-developed busts and slender waists, in the confusion of curls and flowers round the faces, in the jewellery, modelled out of many little filigree-links, in the extremely fine texture of the dresses that revealed their beauty and grace, and in their enchanting smiles, you recognize the grand amouresses of the women of Ajanta. Nothing vile, seductive and immoral, but frivolous, sentimental and charming. Those were the morals of the Gupta times. But in the art of the sixteenth century, woman was depicted as a tender, delicate, innocent but proud heroine. She is painted as an ideal type "with round moon-face seen in a bewitching profile, with large sensitive eyes, graced by eye-brows which rival the bow of Cupid, whose dark raven hair ends in the fairest curls and whose fully developed bosoms throbbed with love longing in their hearts". Their

dresses were long gowns down to the knees or even the ankles, in simple, great lines, and sometimes also trousers.

“The Schools of Rajput Art,” writes Mr. O. C. Gangoly, “embody a whole cycle of Hindu culture, chiefly covered by mediæval Vaishnavism, with its doctrine of Love and Faith. Though rooted in the old Sanskrit classic culture, it takes the form of a vernacular folk art, the pictorial analogue to the great body of Hindu literature, inspired by the renaissance of the Puranic Hindu religion. The most absorbing themes for painting are furnished by the cult of Krishna, idealized in a series of religious mysteries, the Gopis being the symbols of the souls yearning for the Divine.”

## MIRROR OF INDIAN ART

### STUDIES IN RAJPUT PAINTING.

#### (2) Aesthetical and Technical.

THE term "Rajput Painting" was first coined by Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy, the well-known Indian scholar and critic, for this class of Hindu pictorial art of Mediæval India and to distinguish it from its later development under the influence and patronage of the Timrud Kings, which is known by the name of "Moghal Painting". There was a constant confusion of criticism with regard to both these schools of painting, and often some of the best examples of Rajput art were mistaken for Moghal pictures and under that name they were collected and catalogued by the

early European connoisseurs. It was left to Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy not only to draw the attention of the world to the great æsthetical and pictorial values of this vernacular folk-art of the Hindu India of the Middle Ages but also to point out the main differences between the various schools of Rajput painting and the court art of the Grand Moghals. Moghal art, so called, was not an exotic plant transported into India from elsewhere, but an indigenous art developed and enriched by the Persian culture of the Moghal Court. Rarely in the history of the world have two great cultures, rich and significant in their own ways, fused and blended so harmoniously and so wonderfully as in the case of Moghal India.

The Hellenistic influence and the so-called cultural conquest of India by Greece was a failure ; its nett result being the hybrid art of Gandharan sculptures and architecture. The commercial and political conquest of India by the European nations that followed the decline of the Moghal Empire, resulted in the national degeneracy of her people and the decay of her arts. Moghal India, culturally speaking, was a glorious period in Indian History ; and especially from the standpoint of Indian art, it was a period of considerable enrichment of national

heritage. Indian architecture, Indian music, Indian painting, Indian textiles and crafts, Indian dress and food, all these were greatly influenced and enriched by the Moghal conquest of India and yet they remained distinctly Indian. It was, therefore, no wonder that early collectors and connoisseurs of old paintings were not able easily to distinguish the early indigenous Hindu art from its later development, the Moghal art.

It is now nearly over two decades since Dr. Coomaraswamy called the attention of the world to the significance of these miniature paintings, both as works of art and from the point of view of the history of Indian culture. In his *Indian Drawings*, Volume II, and later, in his most valuable and exhaustive work, *Rajput Painting*, he attempted a thorough analysis of the subject and discussed at length, with profuse illustrations, the aesthetical values of these paintings. He has since been followed by other students and critics, notable among whom are Dr. Goetz of Germany, Percy Brown of the Indian Educational Service, Laurence Binyon of London and O. C. Gangoly of Calcutta. Mr. Gangoly's latest portfolio, *Some Masterpieces of Rajput Paintings*, with explanatory notes is, perhaps, the most up-to-date and informative work on the subject.

Nothing saddens a lover of Indian art so much as the fact that some of the finest examples of this art are outside India, in the private collections of connoisseurs in Europe and in the museums of the West. The collections of Johnston, French, Rothenstien, Binyon and others in England are at least exhibited now and then for public view, and are reproduced and written about in journals, so that one does not get the feeling of their having been lost, but what about those other rare paintings that are in the private possession of unknown individuals and rich millionaires, which do not see the light of day ? Some of the choicest and rarest pictures are in the Boston Museum, under the care of Dr. Coomaraswamy, and in the museums of London and Berlin. In India the best private collections are those of Parsanis of Satara, Manuk of Patna, Gazdar of Bombay, the Tagore Collection in Calcutta and the collections of the Rampur State and Jaipur Palace. The Calcutta School of Arts, the Tata collection in the Prince of Wales Museum in Bombay, the galleries at the Baroda and Lahore Museums, the Bharat Kala Parishad of Benares and the Bharata Ithihasa Mandlick of Poona also have some rare collections of Rajput and Moghal paintings for public view. It is by a close

and careful study of some of these paintings that one can get a fair idea of the æsthetical and technical qualities of this art.

“The Rajput School,” writes Mr. O. C. Gangoly in his introduction to his *Some Masterpieces of Rajput Painting*, “forms one of the most characteristic and fascinating chapters of Indian Painting and is of great æsthetic and spiritual significance.” There are critics who object to the word “Rajput” and would prefer to call it “Hindu” School of Painting, on the ground that the appellation “Rajput” or “Rajasthani” connotes restricted geographical area and therefore misleading, as this art was spread all over Northern India from the deserts of Rajputana to the lower valleys of the Himalayas. However misleading the name may be topographically, culturally speaking it is a significant term, and a happy term at that, to be associated with this style of painting. The name has come to stay and it is best known all over the world by that name. There is another class of critics that refuses to see anything “æsthetical” in this art, and considers it merely as a primitive folk-art, and what to them is pictorially intelligible in it, they trace to the influence of Persian art introduced into India by the Moghals. Fortunately,

further researches made by scholars like Goetz, Ananda Coomaraswamy, Binyon, Havell, Ganguly and others, based on the styles and mannerisms of the pictures, technical treatment, dress and other significant *motifs*, have once for all established its indigenous character and its pictorial excellence.

Though there is much dearth of materials for a proper study of the art of painting in India between the closing years of the seventh century A.D., which saw the completion of the last of the Ajanta Viharas and its immortal frescoes and the opening years of the sixteenth century, when blossomed this exquisite Rajput art of India, yet from the few fragments of illuminated manuscripts of Jains of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries and from the Gujarathi illustrated manuscript, *Vasanta-Vilasa*, of the fifteenth century, one can easily estimate their pictorial values and discover the conventions and traditions of Rajput art. In fact, there is little difference either in the technical features of both these arts or in their style or mannerisms. The general tone about these early folk-paintings is weak, there is a lack of sincerity and depth of conviction and also a poverty of strength which is emphasized by the muddy colour schemes, in contrast with the joyous note of the blaze

of colour in Rajput Miniatures. Otherwise, the general features are the same. On these early Indian paintings of the fifteenth century, my friend, Nanalal Mehta, of the Indian Civil Service, a good critic of Indian Art, has a very interesting note, which throws additional light on the origin of Rajput Painting and reveals identical methods of treatment and technique. "The pictures," writes Mr. Mehta, referring to the illustrations of the manuscript *Vasantavilasam*, "are not by way of illustrations of the verses, but may be regarded as a sort of pictorial interpretation of the perennial themes of Love and Spring.... They are painted with all the directness, vigour and concentrated intensity of primitive art.... The figures are bound by bold and definite lines; the colour scheme is extremely simple, and there is a preponderance of yellow, red and blue.... Shading, foreshortening, perspective, are conspicuous only by their absence." The Rajput painting, of course, is not one of pure draughtsmanship; the pictures are mere compositions in colours, harmonious and balanced. As contrasted with the primitive folk-art of the fifteenth century the sixteenth century Rajasthani Painting is a more developed, cultured and refined art.

“The whole composition,” writes Mr. O. C. Gangoly, “is architecturally built up by the bold juxtaposition of masses of severely defined colours. There is not much drawing and the whole design is expressed in colours. They are characterized by un-conventionality and originality of design.... Trees, flowers and clouds in the background are introduced not for their own sake, but as significant *motifs*; nothing is introduced which is irrelevant to the expression of the theme. In Indian art there is a remarkable fusion of form and substance. And if we forget for a moment the subject-matter of these pictures, their plastic and chromatic qualities cast the spell of their magic, and we are embarrassed to choose between the variegated claims of their appeal, their sensitive drawing and luminous colouring, the graceful curves of the figures, the magic rhythm, the sinuous grace of the flowing lines of their drapery, and above all the charming ensemble of their decorative composition. In the types they create, in the manner of presentation and in the peculiar vision in which the spiritual and humanistic outlook are skilfully fused, the Rajput Schools introduced new value into the history of pictorial art. Indeed, they do add something new to the world of art, and this something is indescribably precious.”

This style of painting became wide-spread in India, with local variations and peculiarities, and extended from the Himalayan valleys of Kangra, Basholi, Jummu, Chamba in the North to the fertile plains of the Vijayanagar, Tanjore and Mysore kingdoms in the South, and from the deserts of Rajputana to the Gangetic valley of Bengal. In the hill schools of Kangra and Garhwal, myths and legends of Shiva became popular subjects for painting, and in the plains of Rajputana, Krishna and his *Leelas* were the favourite themes.

The representation of Rāgas and Rāginis (melody-moulds), lyrical love scenes, erotics and nature's moods were other characteristic features of this school of painting.

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## MIRROR OF INDIAN ART

### STUDIES IN RAJPUT PAINTING.

#### (3) *Rāgamāla* Series.

THE pioneering work of Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy in making a critical study and careful classification of the large output of the mediæval paintings of India has been of considerable help to other students who followed him, in not only opening up a new field of research and study of an interesting phase and period of Indian art, but also in indicating its prominent features and salient points and thus removing a mass of confusion that once existed in the minds of the people with regard to this art. There was a time when even the best of European

connoisseurs of Indian art confused the Hindu art of Rajput painting with its later development, the Islamic art of Mughal painting, and often did not know the difference between such strikingly different styles as the Jaipur *kalam* of the Rajasthani School and the Kangra or Basholi *kalams* of the Pahari Schools of Rajput Painting. The little details of dress, ornamentation, background, grouping, facial type, colour-scheme and composition, all these were not properly studied and made use of to fix the approximate dates and schools of painting of that period. Though later students like Goetz, Gobileuw, Gangoly, Ghose, Mukandilal and others have added more valuable materials and dealt with other aspects of this art not touched by Coomaraswamy, for a long time to come the latter's book "Rajput Painting" (in two volumes) will be the standard work on the subject. The fixing of dates, styles and schools in the case of all ancient arts is at all times a hazardous task ; and Coomaraswamy has, no doubt, with the insufficient materials at his disposal and working single-handed, committed a few errors in mixing up the sub-schools of this painting, such as Jammu for Basholi or Basholi for Rajasthani, but considering the time and the confusion of materials, his was a

remarkable achievement. It is much easier now to classify Rajput paintings into their different sub-schools and styles, as there are more researchers now in the field and more materials are available.

Dr. Coomaraswamy considered the *Rāgini* series of Rajput paintings in his collection the earliest examples of that art and fixed their date as early sixteenth century ; later researches showed that the Basholi *primitives* are of earlier date than the *Rāgamāla* series, though both revealed almost the same pictorial qualities. But it was Coomaraswamy that first drew the attention of the world to the significance of this unique feature in Rajput painting, that of interpreting abstract things in terms of pictorial representations. Human passions, nature's moods, musical melodies, all these have been treated in a fascinating and in an original manner in these pictures. The most well-known of them are the *Rāga-rāgini* and *Nāyak-nāyikā* series which have received considerable attention at the hands of students, art-lovers and connoisseurs. It is often asked how far these pictorial representations of *rāgas* are true to musical art and science and whether there is any systematized thought behind them ; do they actually convey any meaning to the musicians and composers and is

there any traceable relationship between the melody and its pictorial form as conceived by these old artists ? I have heard learned musicians repudiate any such associations ; and in fact, at the All-India Musical Conference at Lucknow in 1925, a discussion was started on this subject among a small group of friends, and I found that they considered these *rāagini* pictures as far-fetched and fantastic. A *rāagini* picture, at best, is, in the happy phrase of Percy Brown, “ Visualized Music ”. It is not an attempt to combine the two arts of music and painting in any conscious manner as Mr. Brown thought them to be, but it is the artistic transmutation of a *bhāva*, emotion or sentiment, evoked in the composer or the hearer by a certain melody, rendered into beautiful forms and colours, conveying the special mood or passion which that particular melody has as its inherent quality. If art is *expression*, then every mood or passion can be expressed in terms of allied arts ; and if architecture can be called “ frozen music ” (rightly so), a *rāagini* picture can well be called “ visualized music ”.

It is really difficult to trace the origin of this method of picture-making or the causes that evolved it. It is, however, certain, from the examples

extant, that they may have originated between the 15th and 16th century, and had for their inspiration the rich Sanskrit and Hindi literatures, which were of considerable poetic beauty and descriptive power. Folk-songs, devotional hymns, religious poetry and *Bhakti*-cult were in their ascendancy during that period ; saints and singers wandered over the land gladdening the hearts of men ; Vaishnavism and Mysticism inspired men to higher life and nobler arts and thus it came to be that the period was rich in artistic creation. The Rajput painting is the epitome of the lyrical fervour of that culture as the Ajantan frescoes are the epitome of the intellectual achievement of the Gupta period.

And now, what are *rāgini* pictures and what is their æsthetical significance ? A *rāg* is a melody-mould or melody-type, containing a series of notes within an octave. It is the basis of melody in Indian music. *Rāginis* are the feminine modes of *rāgs*. Each *rāg* has a particular sentiment, mood, passion, and is associated with a particular time, season and occasion. The musical character of different *rāgs* are well known to musicians in India though they question the mental visualizations of them in terms "of faultless lines and palpitating colours". It is

conceded, for instance, that certain *rāgs* should be sung only in the morning time and certain others in the evening time ; some to be sung in the time of the Spring and certain others only in the Winter. There is, in fact, an elaborate classification on the subject, and Rajah Sir S. M. Tagore thus describes the passions to be associated with the six principal *rāgs* :—

“ *Srīrāg* is to be sung in the dewy season and represents love. *Vasantā* is the *rāg* of the spring and is allied with the emotion of joy. *Bhairava* is the *rāg* of asceticism and reverence. *Panchamā* is the *rāg* of the calm night. *Megh* is the *rāg* of the rainy season and is allied with the emotion of exuberant joy such as the coming of the rainy season to so many in India. *Nattanārayana* is the *rāg* of battle and fierce courage.”

Mr. Lakshmana Pillay, an accomplished South Indian musician, gives another interesting description of the emotions associated with the different *rāgs* :—

“ *Tōdī* and *Bhairavī* represent majesty and impress one like the march of a stately king, decked in all his regal glory ; *Asāvarī* and *Punnāgavarālī* are wrapped in melancholy, like one pleading the cause of a sovereign unjustly deposed from his throne and power ; *Gīrvānī* and *Vasantā* look serene and subdued

like a sage sitting in a lonely forest or on a mountain, calmly contemplating the beauty of the universe ; *Mōhana* and *Pūrvakalyānī* appear like a coy maiden hiding her love as a rose does its blooming petals beneath its bower of green, but withal conscious of its beauty and attractiveness ; *Nīlāmbari* and *Yadukulakāmbodhi* come submissive and imploring, melting the soul into streams of tender devotion like a true *bhakta* full of prayers in the presence of God. Thus each *rāg* comes and goes with its store of smiles or tears, of passion or pathos, its noble and lofty impulses, and leaves its mark on the mind of the hearer."

There are anecdotes told of how great musicians like Tan Sen, Thyagaraja, Naik Gopal, Tōdi Sitaramayya and others produced the conditions and emotions associated with them by singing appropriate *rāgs* and thus wrought what appeared musical miracles. It is this inherent power in music that these pictures attempt to indicate, if not actually illustrate. Take for instance a popular *rāg* like *Tōdi*, which is considered as one of the brides of *Vasanta rāg*. It is generally represented by a young woman, clothed in a snow-white saree and perfumed with camphor. In her hands she holds a *vīna* and a garland of flowers. A deer follows her attracted by her music. In the

foreground there is water and lotus, a common *motif* in all these pictures. The background is a bright sun-scorched landscape, indicating that this particular *rāg* is sung at midday. *Āsāvarī rāgini* has a young woman seated on a carpet beneath a sandal tree at the foot of a grassy hill surmounted by a tower. Cobras are attracted by the music and crawling all round ; clouds in the sky with streaks of lightning. *Rāgini Gaura (mallara)* is represented by a young woman of blue complexion, standing on a grassy hill between two flowering trees, dancing and singing to the *vīna*, while peacocks are attracted by the music. Heavy clouds ; rain and lightning in the sky. *Panchamā* is shown by a picture of a shower in the hot weather and a band of musicians playing round. Peacocks spread out their tails and call in joy, and frogs sit round and croak. The leaf buds of trees show new red shoots ; the cattle hold up their heads refreshed. Water fowl gather round the parched pool and overhead a horde of white herons fly across. *Megh rāg* is a delightful little picture of Krishna dancing with a lotus bud in his right hand and a garland of flowers round his neck, surrounded by a group of girl-musicians with different musical instruments in their hands with which they are accompanying the dance.

The foreground, has water, flowers and birds and in the distance of the background, hills and town. Black rolling clouds threaten to deluge the place and there is the joyous expectancy of rain everywhere. There are, of course, other different versions and representations of the same theme but the main *motif* is mostly the same. They are not mere pictorial phantasies revealing the extraordinary imaginative perception of the old masters, in giving forms and shapes to intangible things as human emotions, abstract melodies, seasonal variations and such other things, but conscious creative effort to interpret the deeper problems of life and art. It is the resultant of the conscious realization of the underlying unity and harmony of all life, and therefore of all arts.

These melody pictures have very striking and interesting pictorial qualities and are aesthetically very appealing. There is a vigorous archaic style about them ; the colourings are bright and pleasing. They are by no means such highly refined and daintily finished pictures like Mughal portraits or Kangra miniatures. The figures are often crude ; they have nothing of the charm and fascination of the bewitching profiles of the women of Kangra artists. In technique also they are far below the highly finished and exquisitely coloured

works of Kangra masters. But in other respects they are unique, strange and vital. Their main features are summed up by Coomaraswamy as follows:— “The borders are pink with yellow bands above and below ; the horizons are high with room for a band of dark sky, passing into a strip of clouds. Sometimes there are also represented snaky red-gold lightnings and falling rain. A common *motif* is the representation of water and lotus in the foreground. A characteristic feature is the representation of floating draperies and of coloured garments seen through coats and skirts, yellow and white. Night scenes also appear in these series. The heroine’s eyes are large as lotus flowers, tresses fall in heavy plaits, breasts are firm and round, thighs are full and smooth, hands like rosy flowers, gait dignified as any elephant and their demeanour is demure.” Apart from their technical and æsthetical merits, these little pictures constitute “a veritable *tour de force* of mental visualization and imaginative interpretation in the art-history of the world.”

## MIRROR OF INDIAN ART

### STUDIES IN RAJPUT PAINTING.

#### (4) *Nāyak-Nāyikā* Series.

LOVE, both human and divine, was a subject of deep study in ancient India, and there is a profound science and art of love elaborated into a system of philosophy which is at once interesting and instructive. Its great exponent and authority was a great Rishi, Vatsayana, and his *Kāma-sastra* is a standard work on the subject. The modern science of sex-psychology is merely a tiny fragment of that old science which dealt with not only physical sex-appeal, sex-impulse and sex-attractions but with deeper founts of human nature. It is both a

psychological and physiological treatise ; a mine of information on one of the fundamental forces of life.

The rising and spreading of *Vaishnavism* with its *Bhakti* cult in the mediæval times brought about strange psychological changes in the nature of the people. Devotion and service were held up as the modes for salvation and the union of the Divine and the human soul, which in their essence are one, was the aim and end of life. This path to union with God was made intensely personal and direct, and every devotee sought after his Beloved through song, music, poetry and worship. Outpourings of devotional songs and hymns considerably enriched the literature of the period and a new kind of mysticism influenced the life and arts of the people. Love-songs, Love-poetry and Love-festivals were much in vogue and various new cults arose out of them. The central theme for painters and poets was the love of Radha and Krishna, symbolizing the love of the human soul for the Divine, and this, in its higher aspect, became a great elevating spiritual force and in its lower became a kind of degraded sex-worship. The painters of those days have found rich materials in this for their art, and the depiction of Erotics in pictorial forms formed one of the strikingly interesting features

of the Rajput School of Painting. They are as significant as the *Rāgamāla* series. In many respects, except for the theme, the pictures look alike in treatment and technique.

The ancient writers classified this subject into very many details, and clever psychologists as they were, they analysed both men and women lovers according to their *temperaments* and their emotional nature, and categorically divided them under eight main headings ; *Nāyakās* and *Nāyikās*, they are called. A *nāyakā* is a man-lover or hero and a *nāyikā* is the heroine. There are eight types of them, and these formed an absorbing theme for the Rajput painters. Here, as in *rāgamāla* pictures, the interpretations are the artists' own, and to those who knew its vocabulary, grammar and idiom, its meaning and significance were quite clear.

One of the commonest of representations in this series is the *Abhisārikā Nāyakā* where the *abhisārikā* or the young girl-lover goes in search of her lover in the night time, through dangers and difficulties. The picture is a study in nocturne. The timid figure of the young girl dressed in coloured garments stands out against the dark background of the night. The sky is threatening with heavy clouds and lightning is

flashing, illuminating the dark spaces of the trees. A storm is brewing and the birds are in flight. The rain is pouring down and serpents are hissing about her. The picture is treated in a realistic manner, but some of the significant *motifs* are symbolically treated. Another favourite theme is *Virahini*. There are many versions of this subject. The girl-lover is consumed with the fire of love for her separated lord and she is seen lying on a couch of leaves to keep cool. Two maids are fanning her and at the same time offering her sandal paste and lotus flower to soothe and comfort her, but she is not consolable. In another version of the same theme, the girl is seen reproaching an artist whom she had commissioned to execute a portrait of her separated lord, and the verse behind the picture is interesting and reads as follows: She says to the painter: "From evening to morning and morning to evening, the days are passing and months go by. What do you know of the woes of another? I gave you clean paper, fresh and shining like glass, Ah! painter, how many days have gone by and you have not drawn the picture of my lover." In *Utā Nāyakā*, we have the familiar scene of the heroine waiting anxiously the coming of her lover at the place of tryst

in a lonely grove beside a bed of leaves. She is depicted in nervous expectation and is holding the stem of the tree to maintain herself. There is a pond of lotus near by and a deer is drinking water. Mr. O. C. Gangoly has an interesting note on one of them, the *Vasaka-Sayya* : "It is a picture of a white pavilion painted on a background of deep Indian red, surrounded by a group of trees, with one human figure, a lady dressed in a diaphanous skirt, standing at the entrance to the pavilion. The bed,—kept ready for the expected guest in the shrine of love—is emphasized by the blankness of wall, which in its turn is contrasted with the crowd of trees which practically fill the space outside, poignantly suggesting that everybody is here but the beloved one. In the words of an old Vaishnava song: 'My temple alone is empty.' It is a vigil of love and she is waiting for her lover, standing motionless on the tip-toe of expectation. Her loneliness is laid stress on by the echoes of five straight perpendicular cypress trees, schematic in their rigidness. The monotonous red is the very symbol of prolonged agony of separation which is the burden of the song and the theme of the picture."

Some of the best specimens of this series are

from the brush of Kangra masters and of exceeding beauty and charm. The *Rāgamāla* series are mostly from the artists of the *Rajasthani* School and therefore of earlier date than the *Nāyakā* series. These pictures are more than mere paintings ; they are not only pleasing to the æsthetical sense with their flowing lines and harmonious colours, and satisfying to the mind with their wealth of meaning, but they reflect in a great measure the idealism and the sweet serenity of Indian life. They are an index to the cultural level of the people, a mirror of their mode of life and expression, a commentary on an interesting phase of Indian history. Few artistic endeavours in the world can lay claim to such originality, variety, sweetness of conception and perfection of achievement.

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## STAGE AND SCREEN IN INDIA.

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## MIRROR OF INDIAN ART

### STAGE AND SCREEN IN INDIA.

#### Towards Regeneration : Women Pioneers.

THE question of reforming the Indian stage and raising it to its pristine purity from its present depth of degradation has been before the public now for over two decades and more, and the task still seems to be herculean and well nigh impossible. It is not a question of introducing a new technique here or an improvement there, nor even raising the level of the histrionic talents of the actors, but it is a question of thoroughly overhauling the stage and completely purifying it from its present vulgar crudities and lewd

sensualities. Its morbidness is something to quail even the stoutest of hearts and its technical absurdities are too appalling for words. The simple natural forest setting, in which the ancient religious plays were enacted (and which the "Tagore Players" in Calcutta and the "Adyar Players" in Madras are trying to revive) has been usurped by the most unnatural, uncouth and almost barbarous *stage-setting* of the present day, which is a kind of art-heritage passed on to the Hindus from Persia. Very little indeed has been done in raising the level of the technique of the stage and in introducing common-sense reforms in dresses and in fittings, even by such pioneering dramatic associations like the Suguna Vilasa Sabha of Madras or the B. D. A. of Bangalore. These have done a little to cleanse the stage of its impurities and to set a higher moral tone to it, but otherwise no other radical reform has so far been effected.

Bengal has attempted certain reforms both in its professional and private theatres, including that most important reform on the stage, the bringing in of ladies to play the role of women characters. Professional theatres do engage the services of courtesans and dancing girls to take leading parts in the plays and

since the moral level of such theatres is still very low, respectable, educated and cultured women are reluctant to come forward to go on the stage. The pioneers in this direction have been the poet Harindranath Chattopadhyaya and his talented wife Srimati Kamaladevi. The latter was really the first woman in India to set an example, and her appearing on the stage with her husband in many big theatres in India, has given encouragement to many a young educated girl in this country to brave public opinion and to take to acting seriously. Mr. Chattpadhyaya was the first dramatist, and actor to experiment and to introduce new technical elements into the Indian stage, as for instance, his "brown-paper curtains" with necessary light effects, which are now becoming popular all over India. We may look forward to his reforming the stage to its desired end after his return from Europe at no distant future.

The next to follow Srimati Kamaladevi Chattpadhyaya in this kind of expressional art is the talented young Bengalee lady, Mrs. Leela Sokhey, the second daughter of the famous Calcutta Barrister, Mr. P. L. Roy. Tall, slim, elegant, graceful, cultured and attractive, Leela Sokhey took to dancing as her best and natural mode of artistic expression. She

is a born artist, sensitive and full of feeling. After a commendable mastery over the technique and expression of Western dancing, in which she was trained in Europe from her childhood, she turned her attention to the revival of the old Indian dancing.

The art of dancing in this country had attained a high state of perfection, and was one of the noblest of arts in ancient days. It was a sacred art, and according to the old treatises on the fine arts of India, this was the first art to be learnt and mastered by all would-be artists and craftsmen. A theoretical and, to a certain extent, practical knowledge of this art was necessary before any artist took to either painting or sculpture. "Rhythm," according to ancient Hindu *Silphina*, is the basis of all creation," and, therefore, it was the basis of all truly great arts. Hence the student was expected to learn the art of dancing first, where he would get a knowledge of movement, poise, repose, rhythm and expression. Such a fine and noble art gradually fell into disrepute, and, as ages went on, became the sole monopoly of a definite community, the *Devadasis*, professional dancers. Its high idealism was lost, and the art was used to baser ends, to fascinate men and lure them to evil ways. It is now associated with sexuality and is looked down upon by

so-called decent folks, and, therefore, it required no ordinary courage to make an attempt to revive this wonderful art and to raise its moral tone, and it is being, thanks to Leela Sokhey, lifted up from its present position and placed on a pedestal worthy of the art, drawing men's attention to its beauty, sanctity and usefulness. She looked to Ajanta for her inspiration, and a number of interpretative dances which she gave lately in Bombay were poses and studies from these cave paintings. "Ajanta Darshan," she rightly called her dances. The success achieved in this first attempt will encourage her to lead on in this direction and be the foremost Indian pioneer and exponent of this forlorn art. I would like to see more young Indian girls take to this art, and would even go so far as to suggest that it should be taught in all girls' schools and colleges. What India has lost by its present attitude of apathy, indifference, neglect and positive perversity, only a revival of this great and glorious art of ancient India will reveal by building up a new womanhood of exquisite grace, charm, health and beauty.

Motion picture, or *Movie* as it is called, is a new innovation into the world and especially in this country, pregnant with great possibilities for the future.

It is fast becoming a potent factor in modern life, full of educative value. It is bound to become one of the greatest educators of the future world. Its influence is world wide and enormous ; and as an art it is getting perfected more and more every day. America still leads the world both as regards the quality and quantity of production, and the film-land of Hollywood is one of the most attractive and beautiful of modern cities.

India is fast becoming “cinema-mad”. It not only imports considerable quantity of films from America and Europe, but has begun to manufacture them locally. India is poor in mechanical contrivances, and there is not enough capital forthcoming for a big studio enterprise. The actors and actresses are, for the most part, recruited from the lowest strata of society, ill-bred, illiterate and uncultured. There are certainly exceptions to this, but they are few and far between. The only talented cinema *star* in Bombay, who is both educated and cultured, is a young Indian Jewess, Miss Myers, whose stage name is “Sulochana”. The rest of the players, in almost all the film manufacturing companies in Bombay and Calcutta, are either dancing girls or professional actresses. It is therefore all the more encouraging

to notice that a small group of educated, cultured and well-connected young people are now coming forward to produce high-class Indian films of suitable religious, historical and social plays for circulation, especially in Western lands. Much of the present misunderstandings could be cleared away by such an enterprise. It is a pity that the two efforts of the "Indian Players," under the guidance of Himanusa Rai and Niranjan Pal, *The Light of Asia*, produced two years ago, and *Shiraz*, just now released, should have been financed from Europe, and that one or two rich Indian millionaires who were approached refused help. The pioneering work by educated Indians needs every help from the rich and from Government. The success of the *Light of Asia* film is a sufficient guarantee for the quality and financial gain of this venture. It was no easy task to induce educated Indian girls to go on the screen. Seeta Devi of Calcutta, who acted as the wife of the Prince Siddhartha in the *Light of Asia*, led the vanguard. She is now followed, by another talented young Indian lady, a graduate of the Madras University, Miss Rama Row of Bangalore, who has made a big hit in the new film *Shiraz* as Mumtaz Mahal, and promises to achieve yet greater reputation. Maya Devi of Calcutta is another

promising "Star". With such women coming forward to help this infant industry, there is certainly a great future for it in India. But like Oliver Twist, we "want more and more".

## STAGE AND SCREEN IN INDIA.

### (2) What Harindranath Chattopadhyaya can do.

THE importance of the Stage in Nation-Building is apt to be overlooked by those sober citizens, who regard the theatre as either outside the bounds of respectability or waste of time. Even in the West, not so long ago, it was considered as a luxury for the few, a pastime for the rich and an interesting investment for the capitalist. To-day, in Europe, especially in Russia, says Mr. Harindranath Chattopadhyaya, who has just returned after a long and extensive tour in the West, studying the theatre-world of Europe, it is the most provocative of the

arts. I am not concerned in this article with what Mr. Chattpadhyaya thinks of the theatres in the West, but with what he hopes to get done in India, not only to raise the moral and artistic level of the Indian stage, but to bring it to an appreciably up-to-date and modern style in production. His great desire, in other words, is not so much to be an actor or a playwright, but a producer of plays ; his great dream is to be a Max Reinhardt or a Meirhold of modern India. There is no dearth of actors in India, and no dearth of themes for plays ; but what India sorely needs is a constructive genius, with vision and imagination, to plan and produce strikingly original and beautiful plays. That Harindranath has in an abundant measure. The experiences gained from his recent tours in the West, the close study of some of the leading theatres of Russia, Berlin, Paris and London, under the direction of some of the foremost leading play-producers of the world, the intimate contact with some of the most gifted and talented actors and actresses whom he met in his travels, all these are at the disposal of the country, if the country will have the wisdom and the foresight to utilize his services. Artists of Harindranath's type are rare in the world, and much more so in a country like

India where they are at such a low discount and where greatness passes by unrecognized and unhonoured.

Before India can hold her head aloft and demand recognition of equality, she must, perforce, completely and unreservedly, change her attitude to the art aspects of national life, which are vital and significant as national factors. The Indian public must realize that the arts, as much as politics and economics, are among the most powerful forces in the creation of national feeling and sturdy patriotism. Arts are strong weapons for those who would strike at tyranny and injustice, ignorance or abuse, and no country ever became really great merely by its politics and armaments. India must not only win her political freedom, but also become creatively great, as she once was. Hence, geniuses like Harindranath are the greatest national assets, and India can ill-afford to be indifferent to them.

There is perhaps no greater instrument of popular education than the theatre, and certainly there is no more impressive way of moving and convincing the populace than by the graphic exposition of the enactment of a drama. This is especially so in India, where the great majority of people are

illiterate. Devoutly religious-minded and artlessly simple as are the millions of this country, it should need very little skill and dexterity of dramatic manipulation to excite and educate the sensibilities of such audiences and evoke their earnest enthusiasm on behalf of any righteous cause. But, unfortunately, in India, the theatre is looked down upon by the so-called respectable society, and it is, therefore, no wonder that it has fallen wholly into the hands of the uncultured and the unworthy, and has become a canker at the heart of the nation. The themes of Indian drama, dealing as they are for the most with puranic and epic stories, have always kept a high standard of level but it is in their production and acting that they have sunk into vulgarity and crudeness. It is here that a pioneer-reformer is needed, and it is gratifying that Harindranath promises the necessary lead.

Drama, to be an effective power, must be truly national, and it must deal with the life and the problems of the times, as well as, of course, with the glories of the past, to inspire and guide. It is the duty of the cultured citizens not to stand contemptuously aloof, but to create a demand for good drama, and by the help, encouragement and patronage of the theatre, to

raise the whole standard of art, and with it the self-respect and status of the artists themselves. At the same time, it is their duty to insist on the production of only good plays and to refuse to patronize those that fall below the standard either in moral qualities or workmanship. It is, of course, to the artists that we must look for the creation of an Indian National Theatre, but the public must also be educated to discriminate a good play from an indifferent one, an artistically produced play from a gaudy, tawdry, tinsel one.

The first and the immediate task, therefore, will be to educate public opinion to change its present attitude of apathy, indifference, and to a certain extent, even contempt, and then to make it demand a higher and a better form of dramatic art, which will truly reflect the national sentiments, feelings, thought, imagination and aspirations of the nation. Mr. Chattopadhyaya will, therefore, first tour the country, lecturing, writing and giving ideas and suggestions to such of the existing theatres, as will care to take and utilize them in the spirit in which they are offered. It will be really impossible (as everyone who knows anything about our modern Indian theatres, both amateurs and professionals) to attempt

any radical reform or change or create a new stage out of them. A National Theatre is yet to be, and it must be built of new materials and on entirely different lines. The present stage in India is “ too wooden, pre-historic and ante-diluvian ” to be of any use in such a reconstruction. He will next try to gather round him a small group of talented young artists, men and women, who will dedicate themselves to the art and aspire to be real Nation-builders in that direction. There is enough talent in the land, but it is for the moment isolated, without any common aim or ideal, and, therefore, the necessity for a consolidated effort to unite all the arts and to synthesise them. In the production of a play, the painter, the designer and the musician have as much important parts to play and as much materials to contribute as the producer or the actor. The co-operation of artists is half the success in any artistic endeavour ; and it is the desire of Harindranath to call, in the very near future, a Convention of Artists from different parts of India who will meet and discuss in their deliberations how best to evolve, not only a National Theatre, but a National Art in all its aspects, and thus to attain unity of purpose and achievement.

In order to give practical effect to his ideas, he

needs the co-operation of about twenty artists to join forces with him in forming the nucleus of a National Theatre, each to contribute a sum of hundred rupees as his or her share towards the central fund, which will be utilized for the production of the first play in any leading city in India. The profits that come out of the proceeds of the plays will be equally divided among the shareholders, who are the artists themselves, thus ensuring a satisfactory monthly return to the artists in the shape of salary. The idea is, of course, the socialization of the stage, in which Harindranath is a great believer. A practical scheme of its working will soon be printed and circulated among the artists of India, and those that wish for further information may communicate with either Mr. Chatto-padhyaya or Mr. Harvey at 6, St. John's Road, Bangalore Cantonment.

To Harindranath, as it is to the other great master producers of modern drama, like Stanislavsky, Meirhold, Reinhardt, Gordon Craig, the theatre is something more than a mere place of amusement ; “ it is an instrument for projecting the human soul into space in such a way, that all who see it are initiated into its eternal truths.” That, undoubtedly, is the highest function of dramatic art, and with the

necessary sympathy, understanding, encouragement and support from the public, there should not be much difficulty for this young dreamer to realize his ideals and to fulfil his life's ambition. Young India wishes him all good luck and "God-speed" to his efforts.

## STAGE AND SCREEN IN INDIA.

### (3) Towards a New Theatre.

THE absurdity of the old platitude that the stage is a demoralizing organ in the social polity of a nation is now realized by people of modern thought and culture. Men have grown conscious of the immense benefits derived from the stage and it has opened their eyes to see its religious, social, political and educational values. These values are felt at one sweep by all types of people, cultured or otherwise, educated or illiterate, in a single performance of a play in a single night. It is here we perceive the greater utility of the theatre over the novelist or the

poet. While the novelist or the poet impresses his views and ideas on a single individual, the stage produces an effect on a crowd of people of varying rank and intelligence within a few hours.

To the poor masses and the unlettered labouring classes, who have never stepped out of their parental roofs to gain the hallmark of a University, to come in contact with ancient ideals and culture, thoughts and aspirations, and to see and hear life's problems presented with consummate skill and ingenuity, this is truly an effective means of enlightenment. It wakes them, as it were, from their mental sleepiness and makes them conscious of life's puzzling problems and the varying solutions suggested in the rendering of the plays. This subtle transfiguration of their nature, by the representation of lofty themes and portrayal of striking characters from ancient history and contemporary life, makes them really educated.

Apart from the moral and cultural influences wrought on the minds of the people, there is an impetus given to them for a closer and deeper interest in life and its problems and for a more intelligent understanding of the purpose of their own existence. On the stage, we recover to public view the great personalities of antiquity that inspired and guided

the nations in the past and thereby trace the most important contributors to human culture and progress ; we present before the public life's vital problems that evade solution but demand the immediate attention of society in the interests of its own growth and development ; this alone can make life's burden more bearable than it is now to the toiling voiceless millions, and in neglecting the stage we neglect one of the mightiest forces that make the development of modern culture possible. This method of enlightening the people raises imperceptibly the intrinsic worth of a country ; for, indubitably, the aggregate worth of a people depends a good deal on the individual worth and excellence that constitute the nation. This influence is visibly attained in those countries that possess theatres, music-halls and academies. Russia to-day stands pre-eminent among such countries. Theatres, undefiled and noble, are really great altruistic institutions, and to a cultured and civilized nation they are not only places of amusement but stern schools of philosophy, where they learn the strong steady beats of human hearts behind the rippling laughter and moving gaiety. This is realized to a great extent when there are men to think, money to utilize and methods to employ.

Fully realizing the manifold benefits that the theatre can bestow on a nation, especially a suffering and decadent nation, Mr. Harindranath Chatto-padhyaya has returned with a burning enthusiasm to create a stage in India, which will truly reflect India as she is to-day, and which will effect a silent revolution in the lives of the people to a higher and better expression of life. He wishes to use the stage as a platform, not so much for the glorification of the past of India, as for portraying in lurid colours and vivid forms the present depths of degradation, so that the nation may be roused to *live* and not merely *exist*, as it does to-day.

He will use the theatre not for the proclamation of national ideals but for national needs. He will present plays that deal with the fundamental questions of the moment, not in an educational way but in a propagandist way. His ambition is to show to the people the spiritual, moral, economical and social values of these questions, and how best to answer them to suit present needs. The past, he rightly thinks, has not sufficiently inspired us to be great in the present, and let us, therefore, create the present which will take us on to a greater future. He does not propose to exploit the theatre commercially,

even if it should be for some other nobler end. His main desire is to awaken the working and labouring classes to the importance of the theatre to their cultural development and to self-expression. The theatre, in India, has so far been for the few ; he wishes to make it for the many. His next great desire is to establish a Children's Theatre, where the little ones of the country will get not only pleasure and amusement but opportunities for more self-expression and an outlet for creative energy. The children of India are the really oppressed and depressed ones ; and inasmuch as the future is with them, Mr. Chattpadhyaya hopes to create an environment where they will grow into happy youth and become useful citizens of the country. But his immediate purpose is to create a theatre which will act as a focal point of India's social and economical evils, which need drastic remedying. Half-measures are worse than the disease itself ; and, therefore, he proposes to attack ruthlessly through the medium of the theatre, which is such an instrument of power in modern life, all our cherished false ideals and veiled moralities. He will mercilessly dethrone the false gods we have set up so long and worshipped so foolishly, not in our ignorance, but through our cowardliness ;

he will tear open the veil and expose to our gaze the stone idol that was set up in the sanctuary by scheming priests to lure us into idle worship. The Poet is a Rebel now, and he has said "good-bye" to God to serve mankind. No more will he sing of the "pink-fire dawns," the "ruby-red sun-sets," the "gorgeous yellowhoods," of "birds' flight" and "flowering shrubs," but he will, in future, talk and write about the bleeding hearts, the tearful eyes, the stark nakedness of the suffering, voiceless millions of the land.

And to that extent, he proposes to start an experimental theatre, to be called the Toy Cart Theatre, which will aim at the regeneration of Indian life through the medium of the stage. He will put on boards plays specially written for the purpose in view. The Theatre will attempt at experiments in new stage settings, new methods of production and stagecraft, new technique of acting, new types of plays and even new modes of costume and drapery. There will be a general reform of theatre-life too. The Toy Cart Theatre will be the work not of a single individual, but of the united effort and collective enthusiasm of the artists, who will form the group and who will willingly offer their unstinted services to the great

cause. The artists will, as far as possible, live a communal life, always with a view to give their best to the well-being of the community. It is merely an experiment, but it is to be hoped that it will prove successful. The present headquarters will be in Bangalore, and negotiations are afoot to purchase an ideal place for the studio and workshop, and already applications are coming forth for membership in the group. The number for the present will be limited to twenty artists, and with the growth of the theatre more will be welcomed. The proposed Convention of Artists will result in interesting artists in other fields and joining forces to bring about unity of aim, purpose and action. The first play to be staged, it is expected, will be "The Toy Cart," a fine rendering of the old Indian classic by Arthur Symons, and two more plays are ready for production.

Such then is the beginning of a movement, which, when worked successfully, will prove of great national value and play no less an important part in the national revival of India than the biggest of political bodies existing.

## MIRROR OF INDIAN ART

### STAGE AND SCREEN IN INDIA.

#### (4) Regeneration of Indian Stage :

T. Raghavachari.

“WHO, do you think, Gurudev, is the greatest dramatist-artist in India ? ” I once ventured to ask the poet Rabindranath Tagore, as we strolled one cool morning of an early spring along the shady avenue of *sal* trees at Shantiniketan, talking on various subjects of topical interest. “ Of course, your South Indian actor Mr.——? I forget his name,” he said. “ You mean Mr. Raghavachari of Bellary ” I suggested. He nodded his head in his manner, stroking his beard with his sensitive fingers. “What

about Badhuri ? ” I asked. “ He is most certainly Bengal’s great actor, but for an all-India claim I should give my palm to your Andhra actor,” the poet replied. We changed our subject, but I was set thinking. This testimony, coming as it did from the highest in the world of art in India, was to me a little surprise. Not that I had any different notion about Raghavachari’s acting, for I had always held that his acting was one of the best in India, but I refused to recognize him as the greatest dramatist-artist of our country. I have seen Raghavachari act most superbly in some of his famous characters, especially Othello, in which character he stands unrivalled in India, but I have ever felt sad for the environment he created for himself. I hold that a great artist should create his own environment, should purge himself of all that is dross, vulgar and gross that surround him and rise to a level of purity and nobility in the expression of his art. But unfortunately, owing, perhaps, to circumstances over which he had no control, he let himself be used and influenced by the crudities of the ordinary Indian stage. He accepted the conditions which ought to have been intolerable to any sensitive artist ; he declined to see the sordid surroundings in which he was forced to act.

I have seen him personate lofty characters and work himself up into moods of exalted emotions that revealed the genius in him, and yet to what purpose? The background was the common luridly painted curtains, his dresses were of the cheap tawdry, tinsel stuffs, and his fellow-actors men of average ability. The whole environment was crude, inartistic, commonplace, and the atmosphere was no better than that of the professional Indian stage. There was no culture, no beauty, no art in the whole get-up of the play. The one attraction, and certainly, the one chief feature of the play, was the acting of Raghavachari, which is ever superb and beyond criticism, to see which people thronged in their hundreds. The oddities of the production of the play did not matter much to the admiring crowd but to some of us, it did matter infinitely more. Acting is only one of the features of a good play, may be the most important one, but there are other factors which are equally essential to the success of a high class drama. Stage setting, light effects, simple yet suggestive backgrounds, dresses suitable to the occasion, a simple but beautiful drop-curtain, and above all, a clean atmosphere and a cultured company, these alone will go to make a play artistically successful. That is why I

hesitated to accept the verdict of Tagore and I do not say this in any pride or conceit but in all humility and sincerity. I have helped in a good many theatrical productions and I do claim a certain personal experience in the matter. I have seen Badhuri, the famous actor of Bengal, act and I know how hard he had to fight against his environment, and if I considered him then a greater artist, it was because he did not allow the artist in him to get crushed by outer circumstance. He created the environment he needed for his acting and he did produce successful plays. The other great actor of India, poet Harindranath Chattopadhyaya, considered the production of a play as important as the acting of a character, and in all his concerts and dramas in which I had the privilege of co-operating and helping, our first concern was its artistic production and aesthetic effect. Acting we left to the mood and inspiration of the moment ; we concentrated our attention on creating a happy and beautiful atmosphere on the stage. It was sad indeed, to see this great actor and sensitive artist of Andhradesa, play the part of hero with heroines who were men dressed up as women, painted, powdered, plaited and pitiful-looking. This absurdity has been tolerated, nay even admired by our cultured men and

women, who imagined all possible evils and dangers if cultured and educated women went on the stage; but what puzzled some of us was that a great artist like Raghavachari should have condescended to act under these conditions. The first one to rise in revolt against this morbidity and bad taste was Mr. Harindranath Chattpadhyaya who, with his talented wife, Kamaladevi, set up a practical reform of the stage by acting together. There were isolated attempts made before, first by the Adyar Players and later on by the Chattpadhyaya Brotherhood in Madras, but they were merely attempts at concerts and musical comedies. We have now, thanks to the pioneering work of the Chattpadhyayas, regular amateur companies of educated Indians, who have introduced this much-needed reform on the stage. The Shama'a Players of Bombay, the Calcutta Amateur Players and the Bangalore Amateur Dramatic Association are pioneers in this direction. It is the pious wish of every lover of the Indian stage that its moral level should be raised by a closer association of both the sexes in reforming and purifying it.

I have stressed at length these points, because my recent interview with Mr. Raghavachari has dispelled all my misunderstanding, and he is one with me

in the immediate reforms to be introduced into the Indian theatre. He will no longer submit his genius to be exploited by old worn-out conventional considerations. He will live up to his artistic ideals and rise to his expectations. His recent visit to Europe has broadened his outlook on life and arts, and his intimate talks and discussions with some of the foremost dramatists and critics of the West have effected a wonderful change in his mentality. He met in England the foremost Shakespearean student and actor, Sir John Forbes-Robertson, and his greatly gifted wife, Lady Forbes-Robertson, through whose help he was able to get admission into some of the most exclusive theatres in London and see for himself the new elements of dramatic art introduced in the West. His long interviews with these two eminent dramatic artists were productive of rich results for his future career. Mr. Raghavachari himself is a fine Shakespearean actor, and when he acted the part of Othello before Sir John and Lady Forbes-Robertson, the former complimented his Indian fellow-actor, with a sincerity of appreciation only a great man is capable of, by saying : " You will be a wonderful Othello, Mr. Raghavachari." Talking about Hamlet with Sir John, Mr. Raghavachari observed that he

had always felt the famous soliloquy of Hamlet : " To be or not to be " was out of place in the plot and particularly in the place where it is at present found, and that it would have been more suitable in Macbeth. As Sir John and Lady Forbes-Robertson listened to this interesting criticism from an Indian student of Shakespeare, their faces brightened up, and Sir John observed : " Yes, I have always felt that difficulty too," and Lady Forbes-Robertson added, " Why ? you ever stumbled and hesitated whenever you came to that scene." It was remarkable that two great actors of Shakespeare should have felt similarly on the construction of a plot by a master-mind and should have agreed in their criticism ! Great arts ever have universal appeal. Mr. Raghavachari's fifteen minutes' interview with George Bernard Shaw must have been bright, vivacious and sparkling. " What have you got to learn here ? " he seemed to have said to the interviewer. " You have everything in your country " and when Raghavachari spoke to Bernard Shaw about the ideals of the Indian stage and the subjective nature of its dramas, he smiled and said, it seems : " Do not talk of subjective nature, psychological homogeneity and such things to Sir John Forbes-Robertson, he will not understand you."

Bernard Shaw's views on Shakespeare are well known, and so our Indian admirer of Shakespeare did not discuss his pet subject with him. The other great personality Mr. Raghavachari met was Lord Haldane (since passed away) and they both had very interesting conversations over lunch on all things concerning India, including the boycott of the Simon Commission. It was Haldane that introduced our Indian actor to Sir John Forbes-Robertson. In Paris he attended the continental theatres which are little different from the English theatres, and in Berlin, Vienna, he saw some more of them. He was greatly impressed by the technical skill and mechanical contrivances of the modern stage in Europe. The last word in production is achieved by the Russian and German theatres where money is no consideration for the successful presentation of a play. What impressed our Indian visitor most was the social values of the modern drama, and its power to achieve great changes in the social life of the people. The classical dramas do not play the same important part in the cultural education of the people as these modern social plays do. They caricature life as it is on the stage and people come to laugh at their own follies, and this healthy laughter changes sub-consciously the inner workings

of their racial consciousness. It was Bernard Shaw who first successfully tackled the problem in his social plays ; the more bitter his sarcasm was about the modern society, the greater the crowd that went to see and applaud him. He attacked people's conventions and moralities most ruthlessly and they paid to get thus whipped. His predecessors, Ibsen, Bjornson and others did not meet with the same success as G. B. S. had. It is the considered view of Mr. Raghavachari that India must have more social play-writers like Bernard Shaw, and social dramas should gradually replace the present religious dramas of India. With that end in view, he has already begun to write short plays exposing the social evils of our country, in English first and then in Hindi, and will have them staged all over India. He is enthusiastic about producing plays which will have an all-India appeal and be of national significance. "What are your immediate plans ?" I asked. "I propose," he said, "to start at the earliest opportunity a high class journal devoted mainly to dramatic art, to be called "The Indian Stage or Leela" (the name is not decided as yet), which will act as a connecting link between the dramatic world of the West and the new revival of the stage which I

propose to launch out, and to that extent the magazine will be international with contributions from all over the world. My next step towards the purification of the Indian theatre will be to insist on women acting the women characters and to discountenance the present anomaly of men aping women on the stage, by refusing to act on such theatres. I will endeavour to simplify the technical side of the stage and introduce simple but tasteful stage-settings. No more for me the gaudy coloured curtains, the tinsel dresses and the vulgar crudities of the modern stage, and I will confer with the members of the Andhra Dramatic Society and the Bangalore Amateur Association as to how best to launch these reforms in a practical manner, and I am hopeful of some success." It is only to be hoped that his noble efforts will bear rich results, and soon India will have the pride of creating a National Theatre, which will, in its own special manner, contribute to the enrichment of the world's dramatic art.



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WOMEN AND ART.

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## **WOMEN AND ART.**

### **Women Indian Painters.**

**A**N ancient tradition has it that the first portrait-painter in India was a woman, *Chitralekha*. The art of painting was one of the accomplishments of a high-born and well-bred educated Hindu girl along with the arts of music and dancing in the India of old. The Indian woman has an innate artistic sense ; in the graceful folds of her sarees, the clashing but harmonious colour-choice of her dresses, the delicately-designed and cunningly-wrought jewels she delights in wearing and in the varied domestic arts which have become part of her daily life, one sees her in-born

artistic instinct. The folk-arts of India have preserved even up to-day the expressional side of her creative nature and her highly developed, albeit unconscious, æsthetic sense. The elaborate and richly-coloured *Rangoli* designs of the women of Gujerat, the white, black and vermillion coloured *Alpona* patterns of the women of Bengal, the simple geometrical *Kolam* designs of the women of South India, the *Kajri* dance of the Punjabee women, the *Rās-Leela* of the Rajputs, the *Gerba* dance of the Nagar women, the *flower garlanding* of the Prabhu women, the daring experiments in colour-combinations of the *cholis* and skirts of the women of Marwar and the delicately-dyed hues of the shawls of the Kashmiri women, all these attest to a long ancestry of cultured taste for beauty and art in the Indian woman.

Even through the dark period which preceded the present awakening of India's national consciousness these arts have been cherished and preserved by the women-folk of India. The pioneering work of young women like Mrs. Leela Sokhey, Gouri Devi and Miss Money Patel in the art of dancing, Seeta Devi, Maya Devi and Miss Rama Row in the movie, Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya, Nalini Rajan and Kanakalakshmi in drama, Mrs. Comalata Dutt and Sahana Devi in

music, will count a good deal in the India of to-morrow.

Three women artists stand out prominently among the small group of modern painters of the Indian Renaissance : Sunyani Devi, who lives and works in a quiet and secluded corner in Calcutta, Pratima Devi of the family of the Tagores and Sukumari Devi of Shantiniketan. All these three artists have come under the influence of the Tagore School of Painting and are counted among the most promising painters of that school, and yet each one of them has developed a distinct style of her own, which can in no way be said to be an imitation of this master or that. In the paintings of the students of Shantiniketan one can easily trace the powerful influence of the master Nandalal Bose ; students of Abanindranath Tagore or of Promode Chatterjee easily betray in their works their respective master's technique and mannerisms. Not that these masters enforce their styles on their pupils or make them mere copyists, but the system of direct method teaching which they have adopted naturally leads to such results, till the student, after imbibing the spirit of the master and mastering the technique, starts on his own individual line or evolves a new style of his own. A very

striking instance of this is to be seen in the works of Venkatappa of Mysore. He was a student of Abanindranath Tagore for six long years, and yet his art shows a marked individuality of its own.

In the art of Sunyani Devi we see no influence of any of the leading artists of the Tagore School. She is distinctly herself, her originality is most admirable. She has coined a type of face which is delightfully her own. Indian artistic convention demands that certain types of eyes alone should be drawn for certain types of faces and for certain ideal expression. The Indian artistic anatomy which permits copying of "ideal forms" from all the kingdoms of nature, gives Indian artists great freedom of choice and an endless variety of types. The half-closed, elongated eyes, which give an introspective look, for instance, are used to portray divine beings ; the fish-shaped eyes with long eye-lashes are meant for royalties ; the eyes of a deer in spring time, for human lovers ; the almond-shaped eyes for men of pleasures and so on and so forth. Every conventional type in Indian art has its deeper significance ; and Sunyani Devi, with the imagination and true instinct of a great artist, has coined a type of eyes for her human figures, which is at once original and suggestive. Her head-studies of

Radha and Krishna have the eternal charm of the divine lovers, tender, compassionate and full of mirth and innocent mischief ! All these are indicated by the peculiar shape of the eyes she has drawn on those faces. Sunyani's special charm lies in her bold drawings and vivid colourings. She is a great admirer of the folk-art of Bengal ; a close analysis of her works will reveal the basis of her art in that. She has most assuredly a great future before her as an artist.

Pratima Devi betrays her family resemblance in some of her ambitious works of paintings ; it becomes, at times, little difficult to choose between her pictures and those of her young relative N. N. Tagore's. Pratima Devi goes to Ajanta for her inspiration, and the three big panel studies of the Buddha which she exhibited in the Indian Society of Oriental Art, Calcutta, some years ago, were distinctly Ajantan in their conception and execution. One sees a little trace of Japanese influence in her technique, but that was inevitable as these artists learnt at first hand some of the technical features of the Japanese art direct from two artists of Japan, who were invited to teach them their methods and on which the Indian artists experimented latterly.

One of the criticisms levelled against the Tagore School is that their works are very *Japanese* in their effect and do not show any marked Hindu individuality, say, for instance, like the South Indian bronzes. That criticism is only partially true. The Indian artists go back to the ancient ideals of their art for their inspiration, but utilize all available techniques for their full and free expression. But what is often forgotten in this criticism is that the so-called Japanese influence in modern Indian art is verily the old art of India coming back to its mother-land after enriching itself under the aesthetical sensibility of a picturesque and beauty-loving people. The primitive art of Japan can be traced to the art of the Buddhistic era in India, and with the introduction of Buddhism into Japan *via* China and Korea, the art of India was also ushered in.

Pratima Devi's beautiful big panel picture of "The Prince Sidhartha and Devadatta" (now in the possession of Mr. Jamnadas Dwarkadas of Bombay) must be secured for a national gallery in India. It is an ambitious work successfully executed.

Folk-art in India is essentially decorative ; and Sukumari Devi is first and foremost a decorative artist. If the purpose of decorative art is to weave out

of an ensemble of lines, masses, colours and textures, a magical pattern of a desired kind to effect a cameo of perfection, then, Sukumari's art is truly decorative. Originality of design, skilful combination of lines and a proper arrangement of colours are some of the essential features of good decorative art. Sukumari has an over-abundance of imaginative feeling which expresses itself in flowing lines and intricate patterns. Her "Krishna Teaching Radha Flute" (in the collection of Mr. B. N. Treasuryvala) is an exquisite composition of colour-masses of vivid yellow and green, black and gold. "Krishna the Charioteer" (in the collection of Chitrasala, Mysore) is a delightfully drawn tapestry-like decorative work; "Ganga Mai" or the Descent of the Ganges (now in possession of Dr. Johnson of Trichy) is a fine, charming piece of decorative painting, done in black and white, green and gold. The wavy, foaming waterfall, the figure of the Goddess on a mythological *vahan*, the standing figure of Bhagiratha, performing penance near the foot of the chasm and the general grouping of the decorative details, reveal a remarkable originality that is rare in a young artist. Sukumari Devi will, ere long, take her place as one of the foremost artists of the modern renaissance.

Mrs. Sultan Ahmed is another woman artist in India, who, though European-born, is yet Indian in her temperament, in her art and by her marriage. She is a fine landscape painter with an eye for colour. The rich gorgeous colourings of the bazaar scenes of Northern India, as well as the soft subtle shades of greens and blues of the valley of Kashmir, she has been able to catch in her paintings and present them with a new charm and beauty. Her methods are European but her pictures retain the Indian atmosphere.

Gouri Devi, the gifted daughter of the master Nandalal Bose, is a rising young artist. She is as much at home in the art of dancing as she is in painting; she successfully played her role as the Dancer in the new play of Rabindranath Tagore "Nateer Puja" at the Tagore's private theatre and won the applause of her audience. Kiranbola Devi, Sushila Sundari Devi, Jnanasundari Devi are some of the most promising of the younger generation of women artists of India.

## MIRROR OF INDIAN ART

### **WOMEN AND ART.**

#### **(2) Padmavathi: A Girl Poet.**

**S**LENDER and of delicate build, pale of expression but with sparkling eyes, lively yet tenderly modest, refined and graceful, Padmavathi was the most winsome girl of her days in her college. There was a radiant simplicity about her manners that made her natural and most welcome in any society she moved in, and the childish innocence of her nature made her to be trusted and loved by all people, young or old, man or woman. She was very popular among her college-mates, and her professors universally regarded her as the brightest pupil and the best girl in the whole institution, and a few of them took great delight in inviting her to their rooms and entertaining

her to talk and tea. Though reserved by nature and reticent in conversation, yet she could rise at times to brilliant heights in thought-provoking discussions on religion or literature. The sad smiles playing about her mouth and the melancholy expression in her wistful eyes, were but the inarticulate indications of the deep sufferings of her soul. What sadness was hers, none of us were able to understand or discover ; even her father could not say why she was so moody and why she took such a pessimistic view of life. There was one long-drawn strain of sadness in all her songs, and the one background she had for all her poetic themes was the steely grey-sky and the dark rolling clouds. Death, Pain and Suffering—it is about these she sang the most :

“ The flower will bloom, the birds will sing,  
The sun will shine all bright,  
And every year its joy will bring,  
And every star will shed its light,  
But woe, for my moonless night.”

“ Oft in sleepless nights I wake  
To think of joyless, key-cold death,  
To shudder as a trembling lake  
When passes cold wind’s breath,  
And to feel life as worse than death.”

“ A day may come when these days  
As lightning that hath pierced the clouds  
May perish ere I know the peace I seek.  
Then, one word may I ask of thee  
When they lay me in my shroud,  
One word, oh, one word, will thou say ?  
‘ I knew her just one short day,  
She is now dead, *but she knew me.* ’ ”

“ Far, far from the world would I go,  
Far to friendless hill-tops high,  
To pastures green where rivers flow,  
There a lonely death to die.  
No more there cares will pursue,  
But there will I meditate all alone,  
To think of God and my duty to do,  
And to die, when my task is done.”

Yet a brave heart was hers ; she fought her battles lonely in the innermost recess of her heart and kept a serene and smiling face to her friends. Few knew the strugglings of her soul, and the brave fight this young, tender, fragile girl was putting up within herself. I recall most vividly to my mind, as I write this, the evening she, her friend and I sat on the sands of the beach near her college,

watching the magical play of colours on the monsoon clouds played by the last long-streaks of the setting sun, when, seeing her deeply absorbed in intense gloominess, I asked her why she was so sad. She woke up as if from a deep slumber and replied me in a slow and quiet tone: "What else could I be? The vast, deep, mysterious sea before me is calling out to me, and I am here imprisoned in the flesh. It is the 'Call of Freedom' and 'My Captivity' that make me so sad." It was in moods of this kind that she really revealed her soul. The Poet in her craved for more freedom, for more free-expression, more sympathy and more understanding. Her early bringing-up as a Theist limited her poetic vision and clipped the soaring wings of her imagination, and she had to struggle hard between the intellectual beliefs of her mind in which she was brought up, and the true expression of her real self. She was Pantheistic by nature, and the Theism in which she was nurtured left her cold in moments of true inspiration. She said to me one day, half jocularly and half in seriousness: "Your influence on me is pernicious. You want to lure me away from my present safe moorings of a simple faith to the spacious expanse of speculative philosophy and Pantheistic creed. My soul

wants to soar into those regions, but my mind has vowed allegiance to the Theistic creed.” It was in moments like these that she became eloquent, persuasive and interesting. “I like Shelley,” she told me one day; “because he was a rebel, and I want to be a rebel; he was a philosophical anarchist, and I want to be one; he was mystical, and mysticism appeals to me.” But her intellectual spoon-feeding both at home and in the college famished, instead of nourishing, her growing soul, and the sadness of her short life and of her sweet songs was due to this dualistic nature in her fighting for supremacy and expression.

Padmavathi had all the instincts of a true poet. She was sensitive, dreamy and imaginative. She had not perfected the language in which she expressed her thoughts and ideas, and she had not mastered the technique of versification. Prosody, as such, was a sealed book to her. Yet she was bold and wrote vigorously and well. There are flaws in her rhymings; her metres are often faulty, and at times her grammar is bad, but the themes of her poems are lofty, noble, inspiring and sincere. What she would have achieved in this art through the medium of her mother-tongue, I dare not speculate. The bravery of Rajput women ever fascinated her, and in the old legends and in the

heroic deeds of this picturesque race, she sought her inspiration. Her two long poems of nearly 250 lines each, *The Bride of Padshah* and *Neelavathi*, are noble attempts to recall the wonderful chivalry of the Rajputs and the bravery of the Rajputanis. Her favourite English poets were Shelley, Wordsworth and Scott. Scott inspired her with his narrative ballads, and Padmavathi made a bold attempt to imitate him in her long poem of 600 lines, *The Lay of the Staniks*. It is a halting, straggling attempt, but nevertheless a daring venture for a girl of her age. Of Shelley, her Master, she wrote :

“ Amidst the breaking waves  
Upon the frowning rocks,  
O, Master, I see thee.  
Furious as thine struggling soul  
Rages the stormy sea.  
As lightning that flashes  
Across the cloudy air,  
Flash thine eyes  
Through thy clustering hair.  
What thoughts dwell in eyes of thine ?  
In thy heart, what unbidden pain ? ”

Shakespeare, she was very fond of, and never missed seeing any good play of Shakespeare in Madras. I

remember I took her and her two other friends to see the famous Raghavachar act 'Othello,' at the Victoria Public Hall, Madras, and I noticed how she thrilled with every fibre of her being at the psychological situations in the play, and specially at the soliloquies of the hero as enacted by Raghavachar. "He is a great actor," she said. That revealed the discerning critic in her.

Her life-story is shortly told. Born of cultured, middle-class Brahmin parents, she spent her childhood in South Canara, where she was educated as a child. Being Brahmos, her parents were attracted to the noble and selfless service rendered for the cause of the poor widows in India by that noble soul, Veerasingam Pantulu, and they moved on to Rajahmundry to share in his great work. Her father Mr. Ramachandra Row, who is still alive, is an educationist, a visionary and a philanthropist. He gave his all, property and money, for the cause he has championed,-- the emancipation of the depressed classes. Padmavathi had her High School education there, and came to Madras to join the Queen Mary's College in 1918, where she studied till 1920 when she passed her Intermediate in first class. She was married in April 1920, and after ten days' serious

illness, she passed away on the lap of her mother. She had courted death from infancy and the Lord of Death was compassionate to her. Her premature death cast a deep gloom on her friends, and I was the most affected of all. I was her 'new-found brother', as she used to call me, and discovering the genius in her, I encouraged her in her art and gave publicity to her poems. She often used to say to me, in a soft, sad tone, "Why do you want to make so much of me?" I ever evaded her query; I only knew that she was a genius; a quiet, unobtrusive, simple-minded child-genius.

A few months before she left Madras for Rajahmundry, she thrust into my hands a sheaf of hand-written manuscripts and said: "Now, choose, what you like best in these poems." I selected the poem *A Lament* which was so characteristic of her mood, and she smiled and said: "Yes, I like that too". I got it immediately published in *Shama'a*, an International Art Quarterly, edited by Miss Chattopadhyaya, who was also her friend. Little did I then realize that that poem, though written a year ago, was a prophetic utterance of her impending death, and in selecting that for publication, I was, albeit unconsciously, recording her obituary notice in an

Art Journal, for that magazine came out of the press almost on the day of her death. A strange but sad coincidence !

**A Lament.**

“ Stars of midnight, sing my dirge  
In stillness of the lonely sky.  
Sad be the strain of life’s fare-well,  
Yet mourn not long but gently sigh.

“ Silent stars, through darkest night  
With death’s pale seal so swift I fly ;  
The mourning wind my wail doth bear,  
Yet weep not stars that see me die.

“ Folded in the wings of solemn fate,  
I flit, a phantom in the breeze,  
Yet, stars, weep not,  
Since from earth’s cares I pass to ease.”

Hers was a short life, but rich with sweet fragrant friendship. The young, tender, lotus-bud (Padma) that blossomed and enlivened us with such grace and beauty is no more with us, but the subtle aroma of her life still lingers with us to chasten and purify our little lives. Great friend, sweet soul, when may we see you again !



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DILIP KUMAR ROY.

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## DILIP KUMAR ROY.

**Musician, Critic and Author.**

**B**ENGAL has been the birth-place of almost all revivals and reform movements of modern India. There is something in the genius of Bengal that affords fruitful soil for cultural revivals and national developments. They are an imaginative, emotional and intuitive race and their sensitive æsthetic sensibility makes them creative artists. As one of the greatest of them has said : “ The whole power of the Bengal artists springs from their deliberate choice of the spirit and hidden meaning in things rather than their form and surface meaning, as the object to be

expressed. *Their art is intuitive, and its forms are the very rhythm of its intuition* ; they have little to do with metric formalities devised by the observing intellect ; it leans over the finite to discover suggestions of the infinite ; it turns to outward life and nature to found upon it lines and colours, rhythms and embodiments, which will be significant of other life and other worlds than the physical.” That, of course, is the fundamental motive of all Indian art ; and the Calcutta painters have merely revived the ancient ideal and are trying to be true to their native genius.

This revival is to be seen not only in painting and literature, which are coming to be known and appreciated widely, but also in the fine art of music, which, unfortunately, is not so well-known. It is true that the revival of Indian music is hardly a decade or two old and that enough attempt has not been made to popularise it, as in the case of painting, but that there is a silent revolution going on, effecting perceptible changes, cannot for a moment be doubted. To be historically correct, Bombay led the revival in this direction ; the scholarly researches of Mr. Bhatkhande of Poona, the musical school of Pandit Vishnu Digambar in Bombay, the first All-India Musical Conference held at Baroda under the patronage of the Gaekwar,

all these sowed the seed for the present awakening and interest in Indian music. But the result was far from satisfactory ; the curse of provincialism began to creep in, and soon two dividing camps arose, and an endless wordy-warfare began between the Hindustani School of Music of the North and the Carnatic School of Music of the South. Every subsequent Musical Conference aided and abetted in this separation of the two schools, and undue praise and laudation of their respective merits were the order of the day. Rabindranath Tagore in Bengal created a new school of his own by breaking away from traditional methods and modernizing the art after his own fashion. He soon found great appreciation and a following among the rising generation ; but his style left scholars, critics and lovers of classical music in cold. The Tagore style did not spread outside Bengal and became intensely provincial. The first one to make an attempt to bring about a sympathetic understanding and a national unity in Indian music is Mr. Dilip Kumar Roy of Calcutta. He has not achieved anything tangible or brought about a complete unification, but his has been the first effort towards it.

Dilip Kumar Roy is the only son of that famous

poet and dramatist of Bengal, D. L. Roy, whose national songs are the cherished heritage of our nation to-day. Young Dilip was studious, industrious and precocious, and after a brilliant college career in Calcutta, he went to England and joined the Cambridge University with a view to study for the Musical Tripos and Bachelor of Music Degree. He did not stop there to finish his course, but, instead, went to Germany and got himself trained in vocal singing. Born of a musical family and naturally gifted with a sweet voice, he was able to enrich his vocal music. He travelled widely on the continent, and being a good student of both German and French literature, he met some of the leading writers and thinkers of Europe with whom he discussed literature, art, music and philosophy. He lectured at various cultural organizations in Europe on the music of India, and found good response and generous appreciation. The splendid work done by Mr. Roy in Europe can be gleaned from the following extract of a letter written to him by the French savant, Romain Rolland : " The beautiful songs which you sang to us have proved to me once again that the gulf between your music and ours is much less unbridgeable than is so unwarrantedly assumed. In truth I for one

have felt nearer in spirit to these forms of art and musical thought than to the music of Puccini or a Massenet. I feel that men like you, Tagore and Coomaraswamy are often a little too apt to exaggerate the gulf which you picture to yourselves as yawning between your music and ours. That is, you magnify a little too much the difficulty which a European must feel in responding to your art.....If for instance you had to do with the musically cultivated of say, France or Germany, to say nothing of Russia, you would see how capable they are of relishing the beauty of your songs. Of course a good deal would elude them owing to the difference between your language and ours; but the profoundly universal essence in your music cannot fail in its appeal to us.....Let us try to form once again the great Indo-European family which has been rent asunder. It would be a sight worthy of the gods if this union could be brought about once more.” Dilip met with similar responses all over Europe, and he returned to India with a new hope and fired with fresh enthusiasm to effect unity in Indian music first, before he attempted an international unity through the arts. In 1924, he travelled throughout India, visiting all great living musicians and musical centres, studying at first-

hand the present state of the musical world in the different provinces, the improvements to be effected and the common basis of understanding to be arrived at between the two opposed schools of music. Impressions of these he wrote in *The Modern Review* and in other journals a collection of them he published in Bengalee in a book entitled *The Diary of a Musical Rambler*. At the All-India Musical Conference at Lucknow, 1925, which immediately followed his tour, he pleaded for the unity of Indian music, for the preservation of the classical traditions in it, for attempts at modernizing some of the methods and for a general cultural advancement of Indian musicians as a class. There was naturally opposition from interested quarters ; but that he did influence the Conference very much, I can personally vouch for. The response from the public to his appeal in the papers was not encouraging, but he was not disheartened. Early last year he arranged to tour in Europe and America and went to Vienna, Paris, Geneva and other places, where he lectured and interpreted Indian music to the West. The appreciation and understanding was greater than last time he visited Europe, but ill-health prevented his continuing the tour. He returned to India with greater

determination to achieve his ideal, and to win a place for India in the world's pantheon of music. He has few pupils, who are full of promise, and will, in their time, become great musicians.

Of the few cultural interpreters of the East to the West, Mr. Roy holds a distinct place. There have been European pioneers before him, like Strangways, Ratan Devi, Maud McCarthy, Ragini Devi and others, but real appreciation of it will begin in Europe only when Indians themselves interpret and expound their art. Harindranath Chattopadhyaya is another pioneer in the field. Dilip Roy is richly endowed with great gifts. Young, handsome, well-built and well-preserved, full of health and vitality, with a remarkably rounded and well-developed head, fine dark eyes, and a pleasant kindly countenance, expressive of thought and refinement, Dilip has an attractive personality. Widely-travelled and well-read, he makes a fine conversationalist ; his memory is prodigious, as his forthcoming book *Among the Great* will show, wherein he has recorded accurately and truthfully all the brilliant flashes of wit and wisdom of great thinkers like Romain Rolland, Bertrand Russell, Aurobindo, Tagore, Gandhi and others with whom he has discussed problems of life and philosophy. He

has a good command over three European languages, German, French and English, and is a fine writer in Bengali. His novels are very popular in cultured Bengali Society. Mr. Roy is not a traditionalist in his art, but a great believer in the traditional forms of classical music. He sees a possibility of unity between the Hindustani and Carnatic music, as their fundamental modes of expression are the same as are their origin and ideals. Hindustani music is richer because of its contact with Islamic culture, and Carnatic music is more pure and scientific. There is much in both these systems that one can profitably learn, and there are defects in both that need remedying. In the South, art and beauty are sacrificed for the science of music, and in the North expression is crude and loud. It is not to be wondered at. Most of the professional musicians in India are unlettered and uncultured people and morally not very high. Great cultured musicians are yet to rise in India and one of the forerunners of that tribe is Dilip Kumar Roy.

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MUKUL DEY.

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## **MUKUL DEY.**

### **Pioneer Painter-Etcher.**

THE name of Mukul Dey may not be so strange here in South India as most other Bengal artists are. He visited Madras about ten years ago and made himself popular through his art and lovable through his sociableness. Young and enthusiastic and with a pleasant face, round and clean-shaven, Mukul has a charm of attracting friends round him. He has a geniality for friendship. His brief visit to Madras in 1918 was productive of good results both to the artist and to Indian art. He contacted the Dravidian culture for the first time, and the life of the people, their customs and manners, dresses and folk-art

interested him and enriched his mind. He left behind him a set of interesting sketches of some of the prominent persons of Southern India. His *black and white* portrait-studies of Dr. Annie Besant, Sir Subramania Iyer, B. P. Wadia, Harindranath Chattopadhyaya, Veena Seshanna of Mysore, the Raja of Munugala and others showed his power of portraying characters with deep insight and skill in effective drawing and sketching. There was the sureness of a master even in those earlier works, and following, as they did, his famous portfolio of pencil-sketches of twelve eminent Bengalees, which publication in Calcutta brought him to sudden fame, they had an additional artistic value attached to them. Some of these South Indian sketches were reproduced in *Shamáa*, an international quarterly magazine, edited by Miss Chattopadhyaya. He had just then returned from his trip with the Poet Tagore to Japan and America, and therefore his impressions of the arts of those countries were fresh, vivid and entertaining. His scrap-books were full of pencil-sketches and art-anecdotes of the people he met and the life and scenes he saw in his tour; some of these were subsequently bought by Messrs. B. N. Treasuryvala and Kalyanji, art-collectors in Bombay, to help the

artist to go on his second visit to Europe and America, which has been of such rich results.

Mukul Dey is about the most widely travelled of the modern Indian artists and therefore of great adventurous spirit. He was one of the earliest batches of students to be trained by Rabindranath Tagore in his institution at Shantiniketan, and observing his natural artistic temperament and aptitude and his skill in handling brush, pencil and colour, the Poet sent him to Calcutta to be taught painting by Abanindranath Tagore. Young Mukul was very precocious, and the pictures that he exhibited, while he was yet a student and barely seventeen, at the annual exhibitions of the Indian Society of Oriental Art in Calcutta, won for him immediate recognition. His subsequent works attracted the attention of an ever-increasing circle of admirers and art-lovers ; and it was as a promising young artist that he accompanied Rabindranath to Japan and contacted the art of that country under the inspiring guidance of Taikwan and Kwanzan, two of the leading artists of the Japanese Artistic Renaissance.

Japan had also, like India, fallen a prey to the glamour of Western Art and was nearly losing her marvellous art-heritage, when an American art critic, Fenellosa and that great visionary and idealist,

Kakuzo Okakura, rescued the art of Japan from possible oblivion and obscuration, even as E. B. Havell and Abanindranath Tagore did in India. The parallel of art revival in both these countries is rather interesting. The Tagores led the revival in India by starting a school of painting along national lines even as Okakura did in founding the Nippon Bijistuin, which soon became a potent factor in the artistic life of Japan. The sympathy and understanding between the artists of these two modern art movements in India and Japan were considerably strengthened by the visits first of Mukul Dey and subsequently of Nandalal Bose to the land of the Rising Sun and the return compliment paid by Japan in the visit of Taikwan, Kwanzan, Hishida and Arai, to the Motherland of their religion and arts, the Aryavarta. Both got enriched by this mutual exchange and visits. The Japanese artists left their impress in the technique which the modern Indian artists have adopted, and the Indian artists in their turn gave to their Japanese colleagues something of the idealism of their art. The Japanese artists soon began to paint Indian themes and their interpretation of Hindu Gods and Indian myths in their own manner, is strikingly an interesting contribution to the art of

the Orient. Mukul Dey's visit to Japan was, therefore, of not only great advantage to his artistic career, but of great import to India. From Japan Mukul went to America where he first learned the art of etching. His talent soon won recognition there and he was made a member of the Chicago Society of Etchers, the first Indian to win that distinction. He returned to India for a while before he made his second long visit to Europe and America to perfect the technique of etching and to win fresh laurels. He joined the Slade and Kensington Schools of Art in London for a time and visited America later. At the Wembley Exhibition he was commissioned to execute the decorative side of the Indian Pavilion which made him popular in London artistic circles. He opened a studio where he held a private exhibition of his etching works which got for him an European reputation.

Surprise has been expressed that an Indian artist should have "mastered the use of a tool so Western as the dry-point". Though *national genius* and *race consciousness* are great factors in moulding and shaping the art of a country, yet, given the necessary environment and suitable opportunity, a truly born artist will have no difficulty in mastering any new technique or medium. The difficulty will be with a

mediocre who has not a sure foundation of any real culture or tradition of his own. How can an artist, who is devoid of his own culture, hope to imbibe the art and culture of another nation, not to talk of mastering or enriching them ? Mukul Dey had an indigenous and *native* outlook on life and arts, and was an accomplished artist before he left for Europe ; his vision was undimmed and clear and his ideals were broad-based, and therefore it was no wonder that he succeeded in mastering a new technique as dry-point, without in any way losing the traditions of his race and art. Mukul's secret of success lies in the solid foundation he had in the art conventions and practice of the art of his country. His visits to Ajanta and Bagh have been of an endless source of inspiration and guidance to him.

Etching is an art new to the traditions of this country. No Indian artist took to it seriously, and Mukul is almost the only solitary figure in the field. It cannot for a moment be questioned that there is a future for this kind of art in India, and, in fact, awaits enrichment at the hands of Indian artists. The art of the Orient is fundamentally one of *lines* and not *masses*. The intricate pattern *lines* of Persia, the bold, vigorous, sweeping *lines* of Ajanta, the

graceful flowing *lines* of China and the delicately sensitive *lines* of Japan have ever evoked the admiration of the artists of the Western lands. Lines are to a draughtsman what notes are to a musician. The success of a good etching depends not only on the skilful manipulation of lines and strokes in spacing but in their economic use of them. The aim should be to get the maximum effect out of minimum of lines, and to get a suggestion of "colour-feeling" in the picture without the actual use of colours. The future art of the world tends towards that way. Mukul Dey's etchings have those admirable qualities. His etching of the "Ganges in Moonlight" and "On the Way to Ajanta" are superb examples of that kind. He is not afraid of elaborate decorative details when he can best express his meaning by its aid, as witness his etching "The Sacred Tree". One can see influences of Ajanta and Japan in some of his strikingly bold and original works, but that cannot be helped. They influenced his art during the plastic and formative period of his life and they are bound to reveal themselves in his art. Yet there is an individuality behind them all. Mukul's head-studies of Einstein, Sven Hedin, Tagore, Annie Besant, Asutosh and others show his insight into characterization and a

discrimination for essentials. The recent exhibition of his etchings and drawing in Calcutta, arranged by the Indian Society of Oriental Art, was a magnificent success. The artist has returned to his motherland, after a long sojourn of eight years in foreign lands, where he has been benefiting himself, enriching his art and winning recognition for himself and his country, to place all his talent at her altar. Though young, he has been through the fire of life, faced its trials and difficulties, and now at the threshold of a brilliant future he offers his life and art at the services of his country. Will India, not noted for her generous gesture of welcome and recognition of her great creative artists in the past, be at least proud of her young Mukul Dey, the pioneer painter-engraver ?

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DEVI PRASAD ROY CHOWDHURY

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## **DEVI PRASAD ROY CHOWDHURY.**

### **A Great Indian Sculptor.**

THE names of Mahtre, Karmarkar, Wagle, Phadke and Talim of Bombay and Nagappa of Madras are widely known as leading sculptors of modern India, yet for originality, individuality and for highly imaginative works, Roy Chowdhury is easily the greatest sculptor of modern India. There is a quality of strength and virility in the latter artist's works that are suggestive of that great French master Rodin's influence, and which bespeaks of the great adaptable nature of this young artist. The quality of *feeling* is a great test in sculptural arts, and Roy Chowdhury's works are

full of that quality. You can feel the softness of the satin or silk, the hardness of the bone or metal, the flexibility of the tendon or muscle and the texture of the skin or flesh in all his big sculptures. His human figures are not wooden and stiff, lacking expression as most modern sculptural works in India are. They are alive, intensively alive in their expression. His portrait-sculpture of Mr. A. I. Weir, the Consulting Architect to the Government of Bengal, is an instance of that kind. That Roy Chowdhury has a mastery over the technique of the modern method of sculpturing cannot for a moment be doubted by those who have seen some of his best works. And that is really remarkable when you consider that this artist has had no training in any great academy of the West, like, for instance, the late Mr. Fanindra Bose, and that also the ideals and traditions of the art of his race give him a different outlook on the *form-side* of plastic arts. Sculpture has been a highly perfected art in this country, but the ancients have evolved certain *archetypal-forms* for all their abstract concepts and ideals which they wished to embody in stone or metal, and which the traditional craftsmen follow religiously even to-day. This tradition has its advantages as well as its disadvantages. While, on the one hand,

it preserved the art from either complete extinction or eccentric experiment and malformations and consequent degeneracy at the hands of amateur artists, on the other hand, it killed originality in the artist and to a great extent made his art quite mechanical and lifeless. There are "*Sthapthis*" even to-day who carry on their traditional art to an almost amazing degree of perfection, closely following the old conventions, and produce strikingly wonderful pieces of sculpture, but they are few. It is therefore all the more encouraging to see that some of the modern Indian artists try to break away from these age-long restrictions and assimilate all the best elements of the European Schools of Sculpture. The Indian artist has much to learn, in this branch of art especially, from the West, and one of the most successful of the younger pioneers in this direction is Deviprasad Roy Chowdhury. I extract here below a short and sympathetic note on his works of sculpture from the pen of that scholar, critic, traveller and the General Secretary of the Greater India Society, Kalidas Nag, which appeared in the *Modern Review* for January 1927. Writes Mr. Nag: "The Indian School of Painting is an established fact of modern Indian history, but to hear about the progress of modern Indian sculpture

would mean a few contractions of the facial muscles in ironical wonder which may not be unworthy of a statuesque delineation. Yet it is a fact that for several years Indian devotees of the *Form-goddess* have been working silently and steadily to rediscover the 'form cult' so wonderfully presented in the deathless creations of ancient Indian sculpture. On the Bombay side several sculptors have done good work ; the late Mr. Fanindra Bose has shown great promise, and now we find Sj. Deviprasad Roy Chowdhury, the talented painter of the Bengal School coming out with a series of remarkable studies in sculpture. We find here that latent hunger for plastic form which seemed to break through the vigorous sweep of his brush strokes. Let us hope that his fingers and chisel would be equally eloquent and audacious. The 'Wrestler' group is as faithful in its observation of Indian athletic life as it is suggestive of the subdued fury that would soon break out into a thunderous charge. The left figure in its self-confident scientific pose, in its meditative restraint is a veritable incarnation of strength in repose. This was exhibited last year and has since been acquired by Hamilton & Coy. of Calcutta. There is also a series of portraits. Those of Principal Percy Brown and of Chanchal Banerjee

(a brother artist of the Bengal School) deserve mention. If in the study of Chanchal we find the characteristic inflection of a Rodin stoop, yet the artist has given a sufficient jerk of his Indian soul to produce finally the psychic portrait of an artist's soul. This is not the happy and comfortable-looking caricaturist as Chanchal is known in life but his penetrating gaze into Reality surprised into plastic fixation. The figure of Mr. Keir, Consulting Architect to the Government, shows the artist to be fully equipped in the technique of modern sculpture, and it has fetched the gold medal and the first prize of the Government Art School Exhibition this year.

• But the thing which shows the artist at his best, which raises him above the mastery of grammar and technique is the portrait study of his own father. Here we find observation transformed by devotion and remarkable strength tempered by rare sympathy. If our artists can produce such work, then we may safely prophesy that modern Indian sculpture has a future. The floating forms, the fleeting gestures that can hardly be captured by the restricted sweep of the mythological and mystical brush of modern painters, may be immortalized if earnest "*rupa-dakshas*" like Mr. Deviprasad devote their life to combine the study

of real life with that of the archetypes of sculptural form that India had evolved through centuries. The land that had given to the encyclopaedia of form the Buddha and Nataraja has a future in sculptural art and, let us hope, that many would follow the example of Mr. Roy Chowdhury in order to bring about a renaissance of Indian sculpture.”

Where but in the South, the home of world-famous bronze-images and stone-carvings, the artist would get the needed environment and atmosphere for a fuller release of his potent genius and a completer expression of his talents !

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A NATIONAL DRESS FOR INDIA.

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## **A NATIONAL DRESS FOR INDIA.**

### **Present Anomalies.**

**T**HREE is no end to the problems that beset India at every turn demanding immediate solution at the hands of her sons and daughters now that her Freedom looms large on the horizon. There is the problem of the Hindu-Muslim Unity baffling the best of our statesmen and politicians ; there is the problem of Untouchability taxing the patience of our reformers ; there is the problem of Village Reconstruction needing our immediate attention ; there is, again, the problem of Political Emancipation of India requiring the supreme efforts of one and all to raise the motherland

to a freer and happier state. But few problems, I venture to think, are more perplexing and bewildering than the problems of a national language and a national dress for India. The former, at least, has had its meed of attention and discussion, and efforts are not wanting to make at least one Indian language, Hindi, as the national language of the country. While there has been a general clamour for an all-round change, improvement and progress in every department of life and an attempt at unity in our national life, it passes strange that so far no effort of any kind has been made either to improve our present mode of dress or to evolve a new one suitable to the requirements of the climate of the country, and acceptable to the religious and national sentiments of the people. Amidst an amazing variety of dresses that one sees in this country, even to think of evolving a single type of national dress, seems, at the very outset, absurd and preposterous; neither is the present medley of dresses, incongruous, fantastic, ill-matched and hybrid as they are, justifiable ?

One has only to witness a great gathering of Indians, especially at important social functions, preferably a big Garden Party, to realize the comical features of it all ! The Knighted Indian with his "tail-

coat" or "Evening Dress" (ill-cut and cheaply tailored), white turban and caste-mark on his forehead; the Dewan Bahadur with his lace-turban and diamond ear-rings, the Rao Saheb in a sort of "kit-combination", difficult to make out whether he was going to a wedding party or to a mourning house, and other officials and non-officials in their own peculiar tailor-made suits, most often badly cut and carelessly worn; ties, collars and socks, all ill-assorted and put on anyway and anyhow; some with double-breasted long coats and white dhoties, others with open collar coats and a muffler round the neck, all these really cut such pathetic and comical figures! They amuse the European among whom they move. The European would far prefer that the Indian came to such functions in some sort of his own national dress instead of in this uncouth and ill-becoming manner. He dare not correct lest the Indian should feel offended. He bears patiently the insult we unconsciously heap on him, as we do bear the insult which the Salvation Army people unconsciously give to us by trying to imitate our dress. The saffron coloured turban and dhotie, with the bright red military coat make as much an unholy alliance as the "tail-coat" with a white dhotie. The question is not whether an Indian should or should not

dress in European style, but whether he dresses properly and to the taste. Dress is after all a matter of personal taste and choice, but when one chooses to dress in a foreign style one expects him to do justice to that mode of dress and not to make a caricature of it.

Now, in India, we have an almost infinite varieties of dresses, picturesque, graceful, beautiful and comfortable. Though there has not been an intelligent effort on the part of the people in this country to consciously fashion their style of dress periodically, as they have been doing in the West, yet the ancients of this land had developed a high sense of æsthetics and utility in the dresses they had evolved for themselves. The gorgeous colourings and the graceful flowing dresses of the Hindus have been of such an unique charm that their brilliancy was equalled only by the splendour of their jewels and ornaments. There was beauty added to dignity in the dresses of the ancient people of India, as can be seen from old paintings and sculptures, as well as from descriptions in old books. The royalties in the past ever dressed themselves in gold and purples, rich and varied in colour, with exquisite *Kinkhab* designs ; the middle classes had their thin, gossamer-like homespun muslin coats and *dhoties*, all in white, with a turban

gracefully poised on their heads ; the poorer and the working classes, their loin-cloth and head-dresses which had a picturesqueness of their own. Though the different provinces of India had their own peculiar styles of dress, yet there was an underlying unity behind them all. The head-dress, the *kurtha*-like coat and dhoties were common factors, almost all over the Hindu-India, though the style of wearing them and their colours differed from province to province. Muslim-India had evolved an elegant and comfortable dress of *sherwani*, *surwal*, *pugree* and *chada*, to which they still adhere in most parts of India. In fact, there is no problem of a common dress in their case ; they have it already and they are proud of it.

The problem is to effect unity in the dress of Hindu-India, and to find ways and means of evolving a composite style out of the medley of dresses we have to-day. I should not be understood to mean that the richness and the variety we have in the dresses are of no value and should be discarded, and that I aim at a kind of uniformity in our dress. Uniformity is neither desirable nor is it feasible in a country like India with its multifarious cultures, castes and creeds. Variety is not only the spice of life, but

the true and natural expression of life. Art expresses life, and uniformity will be the death of art. It is an underlying *unity* that is the fundamental basis of all true arts.

In the next article, I shall attempt to survey the existing types of dresses in India, and to try to indicate how best a national type of dress could be evolved out of them which will be most suitable to the changing times and to the modern conditions of life, as well as acceptable to the national sentiments of the people.

## A NATIONAL DRESS FOR INDIA.

### (2). Dress Reform.

MOST of us are familiar with the idea that environment goes a long way to mould the character of an individual, if not actually to make it ; but few of us seem to realize that the physical environment of a country equally does go a long way to mould the type and culture of a race that lives in that country, and subtly influences its arts, literature and philosophies. The Himalaya and the Fujiyama mountains have certainly influenced the arts of India and Japan respectively to a considerable extent, and even flowers like the lotus in India and the cherry blossom in

Japan have very much influenced the details of the arts of these two countries. The intricate and beautiful embroidery of Kashmir shawls can easily be traced to the subtle influence of the winding river *Jhelum* and the green *Chenar* leaf of the Happy Valley.

Dress and colour have ever reacted strongly to the physical surroundings of a people. The dull-green and dark-brown sarees of the women of Konkan and Canara, with the rich-green foliage and brick-red soil as background ; the pure white costumes of the women of Bengal and Malabar amidst the silver-grey palm-groves ; the multi-coloured *chuanries* of the women of Rajputana against the burning gold sands of the deserts ; the brighty-coloured *phrens* of yellow, green, blue and red, of the women of Kashmir, amidst encircling white-snows ; all these are unconscious æsthetic reactions to the physical environment that surrounds these people. Dress is not and has never been a mere thing of utility alone ; the artistic genius of a race has ever expressed itself not only in its major arts, such as music, painting, sculpture and architecture, but also through its crafts, customs, manners, ceremonials and dresses.

When, therefore, the problem of a National dress for India is to be studied, not only its utility but the

æsthetics and sentiments of the people should be considered. In India, religious sentiment is a strong factor in life, and from time immemorial people in this country have adopted certain types of dress for religious purposes and certain other types for secular ones. The former dress can remain in vogue even in these days as they are highly sanitary and most suitable for the purpose ; the much-needed reform lies in the latter direction. The present-day dress all over India is anything but desirable ; it is a jumble of all sorts, half-oriental and half-occidental, ill-suited to the climate of the country and positively ugly and monstrous. It is amazing that, sensitive as Indians are to most other things, they have not yet realized the ridiculousness of the whole situation. They seem to be so unconsciously in blissful ignorance of it. In fact, any sane reversion to an ideal Indian dress seems to make them stand aghast and wonder at the folly of going back to some sort of primitivism. Some of us well remember now how we surprised the good people of Madras, both elders and the student population, by taking to a kind of sensible Indian dress of a *kurtha*, *dhoti* and an upper cloth, which, for a long time, was contemptuously spoken of as the "Adyar Dress," and which is now fast becoming a type of national dress.

The Khadi movement of Gandhiji gave it a great push and to-day is almost a fashion to go about dressed in that way.

When one travels through India extensively one cannot help observing a common underlying unity of dress amidst the multifarious styles and fashions. The one most jarring dress that is to be seen all over India to-day is the open-collar coat of the European, with a collar and tie or without them, introduced almost unconsciously into our daily life which makes such an ugly combination with the turban and the dhoti. The tragedy is that this dress has been standardized in most Indian schools and colleges, and any other change of dress, except the European suit, becomes punishable. In Bengal, students are allowed to go to their classes in their white *kurtha* and dhoti, bare-headed, while in Madras a coat and a cap are necessary items of dress for students. Bombay is as bad as Madras. In the Punjab, the students' dress is more tolerable, except the Sikh students who with their unkempt hair, long shirts, open coats, loose pyjamas and turbans make a very unattractive appearance. It is really time that the youth of this country revolted against all this ugliness and untidiness in their dresses and set a new standard of dress,

both comfortable and beautiful ; and there is so much material in this country to evolve as many styles as there are provinces and peoples, without in any way violating their provincial or national sentiments.

The most suitable dress for our elders, both for out-door and professional work, in my humble opinion, will be a long closed-neck coat, like *sherwani*, a loose pyjama like *Punjabee* or a tight pyjama like *surwal* or *Jodhpur breeches*, and a turban or a cap for the head and some kind of soft slippers, like *Delhi chadas*. This kind of dress can be made of silk, woollen or cotton, according to the means of the person, and to suit the climate of the place, and also be worn either in white or in colours. It is indeed difficult to imagine a more picturesque and dignified group of people than in the above dress. One of the most arresting sights in the Imperial Capital at Delhi is the gathering together of the Indian Princes who look so dignified, so majestic and so noble, clad in the above style. This type of dress is not the sole monopoly of the royalties ; it can be universalized and made democratic as it is done among the Muslims. For home-wear and for social functions, no dress could be more graceful, beautiful and comfortable than the now well-known *Adyar Dress*, a white cotton or silk

*kurtha*, dhotie, and a *Chuddar* to be worn over the upper body and with leather sandals. It will make a complete outfit, simple, cheap and artistic. How infinitely more beautiful and quite in fitting with our climate and culture would such a dress be, if all Indians took to it and made it really a national dress! Such a dress permits any variety of styles and fashions, apart from their being cheap, clean and comfortable. The aping of the West in our dress betrays not so much our *slave-mentality* as our incapacity to realize the want of self-respect in us as a nation and the seemingly utter bankruptcy of our national culture !!

## A NATIONAL DRESS FOR INDIA.

### (3) The Aesthetics of Colour.

THE science of æsthetics has become a most fascinating subject for study, not only to the student of arts and to the lover of the beautiful in nature and life, but to the professional man as well, whose philosophy of taste is fast outstriking that of a born æsthete. The businessman uses his psychology of colour to the utmost advantage, and its practical application in his trade is more fruitful of results than the old method of "learned" advertisements. The doctors have not been far behind to discover the potency and the use of colour in their profession, and to-day Chromopathy is an accepted branch of medical therapeutics.

Colour plays a large part in modern life, and it is coming to be felt and recognized more and more that colours not only affect our physical senses, but subtly influence our emotions and stimulate our thoughts. There is a new science growing round this subject, though the knowledge of it is very ancient in the East. "What is your favourite colour?" is an expression one often hears in modern society, but few really do know their own colour or its influence on their character and morals. This "colour-craze" is a new innovation in Western society, while the Orient has ever dazzled the world with the splendour of its gorgeous colours. The East has always been associated with colour; but even here, it was not made into an art or science, though the people possess a natural taste and a sound sense for colour-harmony.

There can be a science of Colour, as there is a science of sound, Music. In the West, science is experimenting along that line, and slowly a systematic study is being made on the subject. William Morris, Oscar Wilde and others in England introduced new colour schemes into life and that singular and eccentric genius, Whistler, gave a new interpretation of colour in painting. France and Russia to-day are giving the lead with new designs and colour schemes in

their arts, theatres and dresses. Japan alone of all nations in the modern world stands unrivalled and unequalled in her love for beauty and culture of colour. They, in that land of the Rising Sun, have perfected this and to them modern world owes much for the new valuation of colours in art and life. But I doubt if even they know anything of the occult significance of colours and their influence on human thoughts, emotions and actions.

Emotions have colours, as sounds have colours ; thoughts too have them. A particular colour rouses a particular emotion in a particular person. A devotional woman likes the blue colour or the colour of blue rouses in a religious woman feelings of a devotional nature. Let us study some of them. The primary colours are red, yellow and blue. Red excites, yellow calms, blue "humbles". We classify sounds as low, medium and high—*bass*, *tenor* and *soprano*. If we classify colours in the same way, then, red would correspond to low sounds, yellow to medium and blue to high ones.

Anger is of dirty red colour, sexual love is of bright red colour. Pure love—the feeling which prompts one to be unselfishly good—is delicate pink. Envy is green. Cruelty is purple-dark red and tends

to be black when murderous. Devotion—which rises from a fervent devotee to his God, or from a man to a woman—is sky-blue. All hatred is dark-red and scarlet. Intellect is yellow; orange denotes pride and ambition.

How significantly the above knowledge of colours and their re-action on the minds and emotions of human beings are conveyed in the old “sayings”. We are familiar with the proverb “red rag to the bull”. How much one loathes a “green-eyed” monster? Haven’t we heard of “the scarlet woman” as contrasted with the “snow-white angel”? “Though your sins be as scarlet, thou shalt be as white as snow,” is a Biblical expression. “True blue, ‘true friend’” is an old adage.

Dress has a great effect on the mind; colour enhances its effect. A group of Indian women in their coloured sarees is more refreshing and pleasing to the eyes than a corresponding group of Western women in their sombre grey, dull black and white colours. Happily, more colour is being introduced into modern fashion, and at no distant future, the West is sure to outstrip the East in this. But, it is here that a note of warning should be sounded. Any indiscriminate selection of colours for dress, because

those colours are in fashion is to show want of personal taste and artistic appreciation, and also to court excitement, unhappiness and moods quite unnecessarily. A woman who goes in for red garments is sure to be a " storm centre " in the society she moves in, while another woman with a delicate pink dress will create affection, peace and harmony. A woman in blue will carry a sort of religious atmosphere about her, a girl in dark-green dress will be sowing seeds of jealousy, while another with a lighter shade, will rouse sympathy. White dress ever calms the mind and purifies the heart. Black dress, in the case of both men and women, is best avoided, even if it be for funeral purposes. Even our appetite is affected by colours. We feel instinctively that if our food is very red or black-looking, we cannot eat it with a zest. Perhaps, the seriousness and solemnity of a Hindu dinner, where no mirth, jollity or laughter is to be found, can be traced to the predominance of yellow and white, the white colour of the rice and the yellow of the pulse seasoned with turmeric.

In paintings too, " colour-values " have changed, especially after the scientific analysis of the spectrum. Impressionism, Neo-Impressionism and Futurism are the outcome of this new understanding of " colour-

science ". It is being slowly realized that nations produce arts according to their æsthetical and spiritual development. More youthful nations delight in bright colours and loud music. Loud colours and strong contrasts represent a lower order of painting than subdued and sombre colours. Bright, vivid colours ever attract the child-mind. It is a vast field for research awaiting pioneers.

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DELHI DECORATIONS.

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## MIRROR OF INDIAN ART

### DELHI DECORATIONS.

THE Prize of Delhi Scheme, adumbrated, as it has been loudly proclaimed, for winning official recognition for Indian artists and securing the interior decorations of New Delhi for them, is a huge national joke. It was initiated in Bombay by the Head of the Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy School of Arts there under the fostering care of the Governor of that Province and was enthusiastically expounded and promulgated by my friend Mr. Kanhyalal Vakil, who served as the Honorary Secretary for the scheme. The motive was most unquestionably laudable and the attempt was most

assuredly praiseworthy, but the result most unfortunately is far from being satisfactory. The scheme itself was an able countermove on the part of those interested in Indian artists to thwart the subtle manouvres of the Government to import European artists from the West to do the mural decorations of New Delhi. That the Government of India had some such view is now an open secret. Though the Government did not confess to any such definite policy, the procedure adopted in connection with this question and the methods the Government had recourse to in dealing with it clearly betrayed its unexpressed intentions. The Government was in a mood to question even the genuineness of such a thing as indigenous Indian Art and to doubt the competence of Indian artists to play the role of Delhi Decorators. And it, therefore, redounds all the more to the credit of the framers of the Prize of Delhi Scheme that they took up the challenge and put up a strong fight. That resulted in a Committee being formed at Delhi to go into the question and to give an experimental chance to Indian artists. The head of the Committee was Sir John Marshall, the Director of Archæology in India, who is not only a world-famed archæologist but a keen and sympathetic student of

Indian Art, whose views are listened to with great respect. The only Indian on the Committee was Mr. J. P. Ganguly. The Committee invited Indian artists to submit their respective designs for mural decorations for the Committee's inspection and approval ; but the conditions of their offer were very unsatisfactory. In fact they were beyond the means of many leading artists in India and, to a certain extent, humiliating to their self-respect. The artists were expected to make two sketches of their intended paintings, one on paper, on a small scale, and the other on a canvas of the required size, which they must take with them for submission to the Committee in Delhi at their (the artists') own expense, and if and when approved should attempt the same on the wall-space allotted for the purpose which would finally be examined and judged by the Committee. If they did not approve of the final finish as put on the walls, the Committee had the choice to erase them completely off the wall and have them re-done by some other artist. A small remuneration of Rs. 500 or 600 was offered to those artists whose designs were approved of by the Committee before they were executed on the walls. Under such conditions, was it any wonder that there was not the slightest gesture of response

from any of India's foremost artists, like Tagore, Nandalal or Venkatappa ?

The promoters of the Prize of Delhi Scheme failed, in my opinion, because they were parochial and very provincial in their aim and they did not make the scheme a really national one. What followed amply justified my view. When this scheme was being hotly discussed in the Bombay and Delhi papers early last year, I suggested that, inasmuch as there had not been the slightest response from the leading artists of the Bengal School and from Southern and Northern India, the scheme may be modified and made an All-India one, and that a general appeal be made to all artists for hearty co-operation in the matter. But I soon found that Bombay had made up its mind to have the Delhi decorations for itself and every attempt was made to win favour for its artists. On the Committee was the chief promoter of this scheme and his influence in their decisions was bound to be enormous.

And now what is the result ? The Committee has selected their Delhi Decorators almost wholly from the Bombay School of Arts. I have no quarrel with the artists of that school. They are clever in their own way and may do justice to the task entrusted to them. Some of the artists have an all-India

name and a few of them have specialized in mural painting. But what I do wish to point out both to the Government and to the public is that the choice is distinctly provincial and that the whole talent of the country has not been utilized. There are artists outside the Bombay School who are equally talented and who deserve recognition and representation in the Delhi Scheme. The Committee may retort that these other artists ignored their invitation and did not respond to their call. But, as pointed above, the demand was beyond the means of several of these artists and they had not the backing-up of a recognized institution or of vested interests. Further, the fame of some of these artists should have been sufficient guarantee for a direct invitation to do the work. Nandalal Bose is a master-artist of India. His fresco-copies of Ajanta are universally admired. He is about the greatest decorative painter we have in modern India and he is absolutely versed in the æsthetical and technical features of the art of Ajanta ; and what more suitable decorations on the walls of New Delhi than these do we need ? I do not doubt that the Bombay School artists are not incapable of doing mural paintings on the lines of Ajanta, but it must be admitted that the genius of Nandalal Bose

can never be approached by any other artist in this direction. There is another eminent Indian artist, Asit Kumar Haldar, the Principal of the Government School of Arts, Lucknow, who is well known as a great mural painter. He was chosen for decorating the Shamiana of the Reception Hall, built for the purpose of welcoming King George in Calcutta. He was the first artist to copy the wall paintings of the Bagh Caves which are now reproduced in a sumptuous volume by the India Society in London. His big panel pictures of *Ras Leela* have won universal admiration. It is paintings like these that one would like to see on the walls of India's new capital. But fate has ordained otherwise. It looks as if the interior decorations of New Delhi are destined to be on all fours with its outer architecture. What that architecture is I leave Havell and Cousins to explain and criticise. But the interesting thing is that the Government have remarkably succeeded in exhibiting their lack of intelligent understanding and appreciation of true Indian art. How true are the words uttered by a lover of Indian culture: "What passes for Indian Art meets recognition sooner than what is genuinely Indian."

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THE MADRAS SCHOOL OF ARTS.

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## MIRROR OF INDIAN ART

### THE MADRAS SCHOOL OF ARTS.

THE Local Government should immediately decide upon a suitable successor to Mr. Hadaway for the principalship of the Government School of Arts in Madras. The recent Government communication that it does not propose to open a regular school of fine arts, for want of funds, but will retain the present Industrial Section of the School under a Superintendent, is far from convincing any lover of Indian Art as to the future of the School. A School of Art is not an industrial workshop to turn out furniture and toys of all sorts, good, bad and indifferent. There are enough private enterprises for such manufactures ; and if the Government is keen upon the industrial

development of the province, it can well start workshops for handicrafts in all the important cities of the Presidency under their Industrial Department. It is an anomaly that the only School of Arts in the Presidency should be turned into a second-rate workshop. The Government can and should encourage and patronize Indian handicrafts, but to centralize them in a so-called School of Arts is to proceed on wrong lines. From time immemorial, Indian art-crafts have been cottage industries and the skilled craftsmen have carried on their traditional art in their villages, unfettered by any rules or regulations. What the Government should have done to encourage these industries was to subsidize these workmen, open Central Stores for the sale of their products and in other ways find a market for their art-wares. Instead, they have gone quite the wrong way all these years. That has been the tragedy of all Government Schools of Arts in India. When E. B. Havell took charge of the Calcutta School of Arts, he found this anomaly unbearable, and he put up a strong fight against the Government to turn this school into a real Academy of Art, where the creative faculties of the students would find free play and be released under proper training. The very first thing he did was to collect a

good collection of old Indian paintings to form a gallery for the inspiration of art-students in the school and then to consolidate and strengthen the Fine Arts Departments. The Industrial Section was made to specialize in designing old styles of Indian furniture and developing the indigenous decorative arts of India. Mr. Kipling of the Mayo School of Lahore made similar attempts in that direction. But unfortunately for Madras and Bombay, their Art Schools have been put in charge of men who had not much sympathy with Indian ideals of Art, who were not very imaginative and who lacked initiative. These two Presidency Schools have suffered a great deal in this direction.

When the Reforms came, one hoped that things would improve, since both the Industrial and Educational Departments of the Provinces were put in charge of responsible Ministers as transferred subjects. Except for the solitary instance of the U. P. Government, where the Educational Minister, the Hon. Rai Rajeswari Bali, a great lover and connoisseur of Indian Art, appointed a leading artist of the Tagore School, Mr. Asit Kumar Haldar, as Principal of the Government School of Arts at Lucknow, we have had no gesture of any kind from the Ministers of

other Provinces. The Calcutta School of Arts has been safely set on its own path and is rapidly developing along distinctly national lines, thanks to the efforts of Havell, Abanindranath Tagore and Percy Brown. The School at Lucknow has shown considerable progress within the last three years, since Mr. Haldar was appointed as the Head of the School. In fact, in the sections of architecture, town-planning and designing, this School surpasses any other School of Arts in India. Mr. Haldar, the Principal, was lately invited by a Ruling Chief in Northern India to design a new Capital for his State. The Mayo School at Lahore is on fairly national lines under the direction of Mr. Samarendranath Gupta and his sympathetic European Head.

The worst sinner in this respect has been the School of Arts in this Presidency of Madras. It has not so far produced one great artist or craftsman. It has been run and worked as a Government workshop. What does the Madras Government propose to do for the future ? Does it want this institution to be just a mere workshop or a real School of Arts ? The political exigencies of the Province bring strange results. The former Minister for Development, Mr. Ranganatha Mudaliar, was distinctly in favour of an

Indian artist being placed at the head of affairs and my recommendation to get Mr. Deviprasad Roy Chowdhury as Principal had his heartiest support, as well as the support of his successor Mr. Sethurathnam Iyer, the present Minister. The Chief Minister, Dr. P. Subbaroyan, was believed to be sympathetic with that idea. The anomaly of this post is that it is under the charge of two Heads of Departments, Industrial and Educational, and therefore requires the approval and sanction of the two respective Ministers.

There has of late been a good deal of criticism as to the successor of Mr. Hadaway. But it should not be difficult for the Government to select a suitable man for the post, after consulting some of their best advisers. The Government, it is to be hoped, will make all possible efforts to run this School on distinctly healthy and national lines. The man to be the head of it must not only be an artist, well-trained in both Eastern and Western methods of painting and sculpturing, but a skilled craftsman who can plan, design and decorate in the best possible oriental style. Such an artist is sure to guide this School to its desired end.

## MIRROR OF INDIAN ART

### HELLENISM IN INDIAN ART.

#### Some European Theories Examined.

**A**RCHÆOLOGY is not art ; and yet, strange as it may seem, it was archæologists that have, till very recently, interpreted Oriental Art to the West, and the theories they propounded and the conclusions they arrived at in their findings, still dominate the world of art all over. Archæologists, both by their scholarship and aptitude, are necessarily antiquarians and their interest mainly lies in the historical value of the objects discovered. They are mostly concerned with epigraphy, paleography and iconography, in fixing dates, eras and periods, and in discovering a connecting historical continuity of a race or nation and

its cultural reactions to its environments. The *ideals* of the arts of a race and the æsthetic philosophy of its people do not generally interest them very much. Magnificent and praiseworthy as have been their services along their own lines, their criticisms and conclusions on the origin, growth and development of the fine arts have been confusing and often misleading. In common with Egypt, Assyria, Persia and China, India had also suffered a good deal at the hands of archæologists. One has only to refer, for instance, to the peculiar view some of these scholars held with regard to Indian sculpture. One of the foremost among them wrote not long ago : " After 300 A.D. Indian sculpture properly so-called hardly deserves to be reckoned as art. The figures both of men and animals become stiff and formal, and the idea of power is clumsily expressed by the multiplication of members. The many-headed, many-armed gods and goddesses whose images crowd the walls and roofs of mediæval temples have no pretensions to beauty and are frequently hideous and grotesque." Such a statement as the above cannot but rouse the indignation of any student of Indian sculpture, asserted as it is in the face of proven and oft-repeated facts, that Indian sculpture had really attained its

zenith in the eighth century A.D. (as witness the magnificent pieces of sculpture of Elephanta, Mahabalipuram and Borobodur) and that definite artistic canons were formulated and followed by the craftsmen (as seen in the writings of Sukracharya). But then, this is only one of the many mischiefs that remain to be rectified, and a true and proper estimation of the æsthetical values of Indian art remains yet to be apprised by future students and critics. The most amazing and the too loudly trumpeted of these claims is, of course, the so-called Greek influence on Indian Art which we shall now proceed to consider.

There is a limit even to the wisdom of the wise men of the West! One would have thought that, with the extensive researches, critical analysis and convincing conclusions of such eminent and discerning students of art, as Codrington, Ananda Coomaraswamy, Havell, Gangoly, William Cohen, Stella Kramrisch and others, on the fetish of Hellenistic origin and influence of Indian images set up by Foucher—Fergusson & Co., there was an end to that superstition. But the hydra-headed monster seems to raise its head once again in the "indubitable conclusions" arrived at by Von Lecoq of Berlin in his

recent researches in Central Asia on the origin of Indian sculptures. Lecoq may be a great savant, but he is not infallible.

It is interesting, and at the same time amusing, to observe the extraordinary unwillingness on the part of certain European scholars to concede to India anything great or noble in her history. They must trace it to some foreign origin or influence. If the Taj is the most beautiful building in the world, it must have been designed by some unknown Italian architect ; if the Hindu temple pillars are stately, elegant and majestic, they must have been influenced either from Persia or from Egypt ; if the Hindu and Buddhistic sculptures are strikingly significant and æsthetically conceived, they must have had their origin in Greece or influenced by her. Such an attitude of mind was almost an obsession with a section of early European students of Indian art. A sensitive, imaginative, speculative and unpractical race like the Hindus, they thought, was incapable of any practical achievements in the plastic arts.

And now what is this so much discussed Greek origin of Indian images ? Foucher, an archæologist of great eminence, thought that the *motif* of the figure of the meditating Buddha must have been taken

by the Buddhist sculptors from the Greeks when they invaded India, as the teachings of the Lord Buddha strictly prohibited image worship, and there were no images of Buddha in India before the Greeks came. It is a flimsy argument at the best. The elaborately carved railings of Barhut and Sanchi have innumerable small figures in sitting posture, which have no trace of Greek influence either in their *motif* or in their expression.

Further the art of image-making in India is as old as the Vedas. Not only the *Sutras* of Patanjali describe these images (*murtis*), but the *Brahmanas* of the Vedas refer to them also. The cross-legged sitting posture is one of the *asanas* in practical Yoga ; and the great Lord of the Universe has ever been represented in the Hindu books and *icons* as a *Maha Yogi*, seated cross-legged in a deep contemplative state. The image of *Dakshinamurti*, sitting under a tree in the posture described above, is an ancient idea with the Hindus. In fact, it is a visible representation, rendered in stone or in metal, of an inward beatitude of the mind and soul, at a certain stage in Yoga development, where, senses controlled, mind equipoised, soul self-illumined, the Yogi reaches the highest state of *Samadhi*. At that level, he is intensively active,

dynamic and vibrant, yet serene and self-composed. He is actively passive and passively active, if a paradox can explain a truth.

It is this high state of *Yoga* that is represented in the figures of the *Dhyani Buddha*. It is a fundamentally Indian conception. We do not know if the ancient Greeks had developed a *Yoga* system of their own, and if they had also studied and practised the 54 kinds of postures (*asanas*) which the Indian Yogis even now practise. Even if they had, we have no sufficient evidence to show that they introduced it into India. The ancient “*Shilpis*” of India have evolved a thousand and one forms (including that highest form of sculptural art ever conceived by man), the figure of the Dancing Shiva (*Nataraja*) with characteristic poses and gestures for their deities, and it is really amusing to be told now by Von Lecoq that “India and China borrowed the images of all the classical Greek gods, which they have adapted to their religions and needs.” Eureka ! A new Archimedes indeed !!

And now what are these Gandharan sculptures of which so much fuss is made ? At best they are a bastard and hybrid type of art. The Hellenistic

wave of civilization that moved eastwards under the directing personality of Alexander, was not the highest crest of Greek culture. It was a decadent, degenerate Hellenism, not Periclean Greece, that swamped and stampeded over Northern India, and with it came a civilization that was equally decadent and degenerate. How the art of such a conquering nation could ennable, enrich and influence a highly perfected art of a settled civilization like the Hindus and Buddhists, one is at a loss to understand. The fusion of these two cultures did, indeed, result, as is inevitable, in a mongrelizing type of art, which goes by the high-sounding name of "Greco-Bactrian" or "Gandharan" art. A careful, close and discriminating study of the best pieces of early Buddhist sculpture will reveal their respective merits and demerits even to the unaccustomed eyes and the untutored mind of a layman. The former is dynamic, vital, throbbing with life, and full of subtle suggestiveness of the realities of an inner world of subjective religious experience, while the latter has all the charm of outer perfection of form but is devoid of life-energy. It is elegant and pleasing to the senses, but not inspiring. It is weak and effeminate and is like the glittering oyster-shell without the pearl within. To claim for

that art in India a unique place and to trace all the greatest achievements of the ancients in that direction to its influence, is too much, indeed, to demand even from a credulous public ! The real significance of Gandharan sculptures lies not so much either in the Greek artist coining a type for the Buddhist pantheon or in the Indian craftsman being influenced by the ideals of Greek art, but in the philosophy and ideals of the life of the people in this country moulding and shaping a contemporary art which was at once religious and æsthetical. Hindu art was great before the Greeks came and remained great after they had come and gone, and its degeneracy began only when a hybrid type was imposed upon it. The only noble exception to this was in the art of painting under the Great Moghals. The native school of painting then extant, known as the Rajput School of Painting, did not get itself lost or get dominated by the Persian art that the Moghals brought with them, but on the other hand subtly influenced and enriched it. It was a case of assimilation, absorption and identity. The same cannot be said for Indian art under the present alien rule ; it resulted also in a hybrid type, which is neither national nor æsthetical. The modern renaissance saved Indian art from its gradual decay and

degeneracy, even as the Gupta renaissance saved Indian sculpture from its Gandharan curse. Such is really the story of Hellenism in Indian Art.





